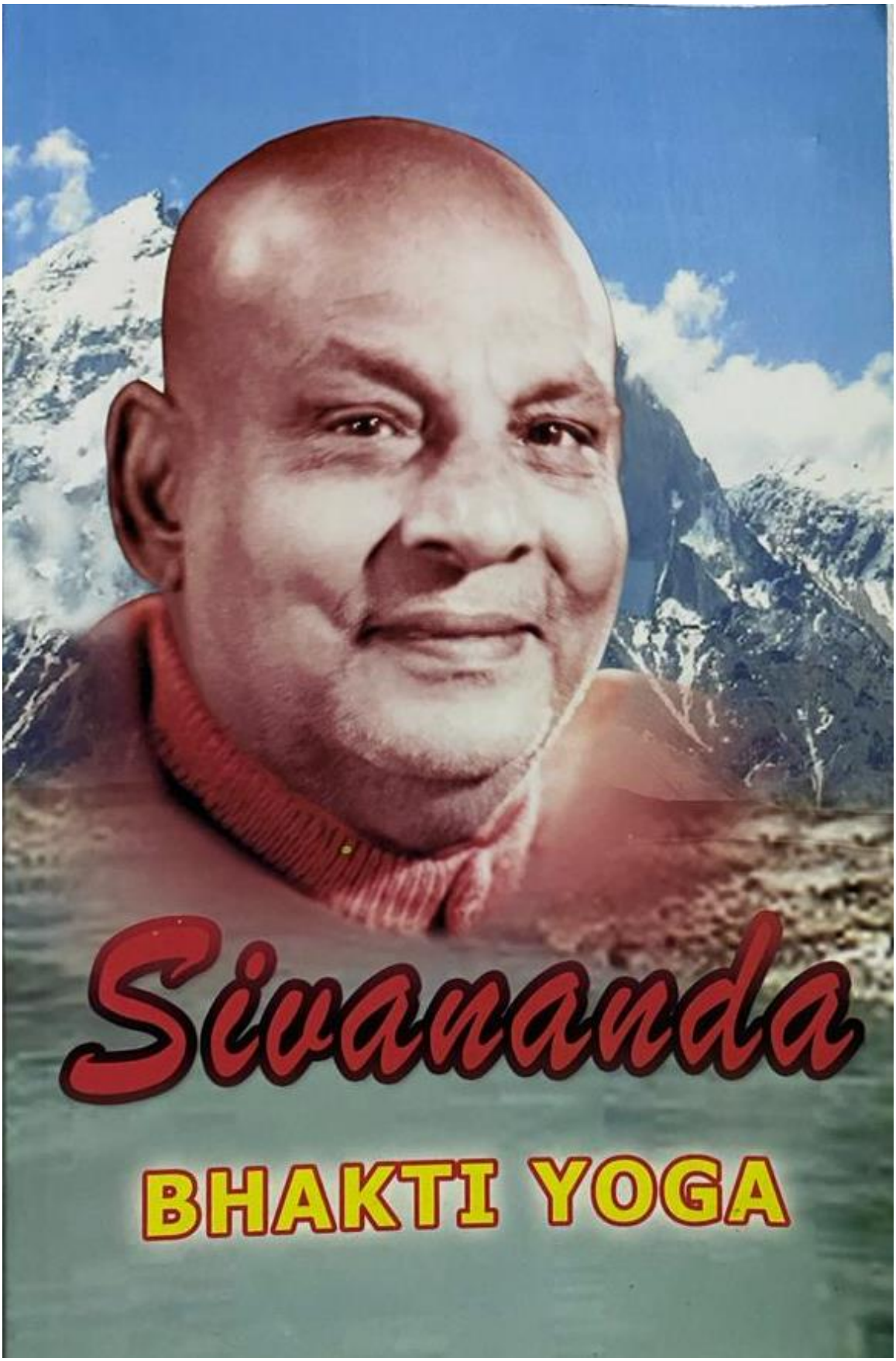
Sivananda
BHAKTI YOGA

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By Swami Sivananda

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PREFACE

Swami Sivananda did not write text books as such. The books he wrote were the outpourings of wisdom from his own direct realisation of the Truth.

From his books you will derive not only the benefit of his wisdom and knowledge of both practical and esoteric matters pertaining to yoga, but also the power of his spiritual force.

Swami Sivananda had a unique style - simple, direct and compelling. His books are not dull treatises on yoga and philosophy, rather his enthusiasm and eagerness to help all is evident in every page, lifting the reader to new heights of understanding.

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H.H. Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji Maharaj, whose mammoth task was to compile and edit almost 300 of Holy Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji's books into 19 volumes, in spite of his demanding programmes and failing health.

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The Publishers

INTRODUCTION

There are as many sects in this world as there are sands on the sea-shore. People have lost sight of the true essence of religion. They fight unnecessarily for petty dogmas, for externals and nonessentials. They publish nasty leaflets, one abusing the other. On the public platform one preacher abuses another preacher of a different cult. One preacher of a certain school of thought will declare openly the defects of another school of thought. Even the so-called educated people shamelessly fight amongst themselves. This deplorable state of affairs is going on nowadays. It is shocking to see this in the name of religion.

You can reach Mount Kailas through different routes, via Almora, Gangotri, Badri-Narayan, Joshimath, Kashmir, etc. The destination is the same though the routes are different. The final destination for all the rivers is the ocean. You can reach Calcutta from Madras by train or by steamer or by motor car or by aeroplane. What does it matter? The destination is the same.

Doctrines may also diverge as widely from one another as do paths, but the goal to be reached, Self-realisation, is always the same.

There are different types of minds. People have different tastes, tendencies, temperaments, inclinations and capacities for sadhana, so various paths are indispensably requisite. Advaita school, Dvaita school, Monistic school, qualified Monistic school, Theosophy, Sufism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Mazdaism and many more
'isms'; Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj and Dharma Samaj. Many more are needed. There must be as many 'isms' and samajas as there are types of minds. Lord Siva says there are crores of ways or paths for controlling the mind.

It is only jealous, intolerant, narrow-hearted, petty-minded people who fight amongst themselves for trifling things. Differences melt away when one's heart expands, when one gets God-realisation. Realised souls can never fight. They have equal vision and equal love for all. They look to the essentials of every sect or cult, which are the same everywhere. Every religion, every cult and every sect declares: "There is one Truth. It has to be approached by speaking truth, by loving all, by leading a life of continence, purity and self-control, by concentration, meditation and devotion."

Four blind men began to feel an elephant for the first time. One caught hold of the elephant's ears and said, "The elephant is like a winnowing fan." Another caught hold of the legs and said, "The elephant is like a pillar." Another caught hold of the tail and said,
"The elephant is like a big whip." They began to fight amongst themselves regarding their experiences. In the same way some villagers who saw a fire-brigade engine for the first time began to fight amongst themselves. One man said, "This is all fire," another said, "This is all water," while a third remarked, "This is all iron." Dire ignorance is the cause of petty quarrels. Similar is the case with the petty-minded ignorant sectarians who fight amongst themselves for trifling matters.

Just as a tree appears to be of an equal height for a man who has climbed to the top of the hill, so also for a realised bhagavata who has reached the sublime heights of divine consciousness and bhava samadhi, all sects and all people look alike.

Brahman is one. Truth or God is one. Scriptures are one. Vedas are one. Virtue and devotion, concentration and meditation and samadhi are one. Realisation, true religion, the religion of love and the religion of self-realisation are all one. Energy is one. Sun is one. Moon is one. Space is one. Thought image is one, though languages are different. Mercy and sincerity are one. There is no such thing as American sincerity or Japanese honesty. Body is one. It is made up of the five elements in England, China and Africa. Blood is one. The blood of a Chinese, African negro, English aristocrat or American millionaire is the same.

It contains the same blood-plasma, haemoglobin, red corpuscles and leococytes. The feeling is the same in all. If you can anyoner thirst vagabond he becomes angry. Everyone gets hunger, thirst, defecation, micturition, exhilaration, depression and happy and sorrowful moods. The heart, liver, spleen, bowels, the organs of action and sensation and the intellectual faculty that comprehends are the same in all. The goal to be reached by all, viz, God-realisation, is also the
same.

Take the kernel, core or essence and ruthlessly throw away the skin or the shell. Are they not fools who leave the grain and waste their time in quarrelling about the chaff? I pity them. They are hopeless, incorrigible specimens of humanity.

Life is short and time is fleeting. Time is precious. Remember the goal and the purpose for which you have taken this physical body. Struggle hard towards the fulfilment of the end you have come here to accomplish. Let all march courageously towards the goal, be it by train or tonga, car or plane. Let all strive after the true religion, which is fundamentally the same in all sects or cults or schools.

If the essence of all religions is one and the same, to what avail is this wrangling and quarrelling amongst sects? Let us therefore strive in right earnest after the achievement of that great end of human life, the true essence of all religions - devotion to God's divine love or bhakti — which alone can free us from the wheel of births and deaths, give us highest knowledge, infinite bliss, supreme peace, eternal satisfaction and immortality!

PHILOSOPHY OF BHAKTI

Bhakti is devotion or unselfish love. This is the literal meaning of the word. It comes from the root 'bhaj' — to serve or be deeply interested in. Bhakti is, therefore, an intense attachment to God or deep interest in God and things concerned with God.

The innate nature of all beings is to love an external object. We cannot but love or cherish something in the heart. The Absolute alone exists. Love for external things is an unconscious internal urge to become unified with everything. For in reality man is everything, the Absolute Itself. Man is only an ego apparently separated from it.

Love is the forerunner of experience. Love is the craving; experience is the fulfilment of it. None can live without love for something.

The mind is the main sense of perception, for it is only the mind that perceives through the various channels of the senses. The senses do not work when the mind does not. It is folly on our part to allow the mind to run extrovert in all directions. The dissipated rays of the mind take interest in countless objects of the universe, seen and heard equally. Yogis have come to the conclusion that the mind that is centered in one point of space at all times can do and undo things with supernatural force. It is the concentrated ray of the sun passing through a lens that burns things focussed through it, and not so much the rays that are scattered here and there. The mind should not jump from one thing to another — this is the way of samsara (worldly life). This should be stopped by controlling the mind by making it one-pointed. Mind has to be concentrated on one substance, be it this or that.

Man can concentrate his mind on any object. He can concentrate his mind on his wife or children, as he usually does, but this is not the concentration or love that is meant here. Meditation on or love towards the objects of earthly pleasure are binding chains which hurl the jiva down to many cycles of birth and death. We mean here concentration on and love for God. This love of unselfish origin is a ladder to final emancipation.

Emotions are generally considered as a hindrance in perfect realisation, but only certain emotions are of a binding nature while certain others will liberate the jiva from bondage. The conception of God does not rouse in man any binding emotion. It is pure emotion devoid of carnality and attachment. One cannot develop earthly love towards God. The conception of God and love for

God rouses the purest of emotions and it is far better than evil emotions which overpower man day and night. Those who cannot still all emotions must have at least pure emotions. This is the significance of divine emotion on the path of bhakti. Love for God can never be the type of love cherished towards wife, children and property. There is much difference, though even love for God is given an earthly colouring like that of son, husband, father, friend etc., by some devotees who find it difficult to break all earthly connections at a stretch.

How then does love for God give us liberation from samsara? Man is an egoistic entity. His only enemy is the ego. He feels that he is entirely different from other things of the world. He is convinced that he is sharply marked off from the universe by his physical body. He is sure that he is only the body even though he may try to deny it in any way. When he says 'I' he always points to his chest and not to the yonder tree. Many unfortunate vedantins also feel that when they assert "I am Brahman," they mean only that the body is Brahman. It is very difficult to separate the 'I' from the notion of the body. When one says "I am Ramakrishna," he means only that the body is Ramakrishna. None can get rid of this notion of the body as the real Self. The ideal of all yogas is to root out this sense of ego.

Bhakti yoga is a method to kill the sense of separateness of egoism. It annihilates the modifications of the mind and fills the individual with universal consciousness. A bhakta says: "O Lord! I am Thine. All is Thine. I am not a separate entity. I have no power to do anything. You are doing everything, taking myself as an instrument. O Lord! You are everywhere. I cannot even move, for You are everywhere. I am walking over Your Body. I am not able to live separately for I am seeing You everywhere. You appear as the man and the woman and as the old man that totters with a stick on the road. You have become everything. I have no independence. I am Your slave. A slave has no optional views. He can do only what the Master commands him to do. I am doing nothing. You only are doing through me. You are the Doer. You are the Enjoyer. I am nothing. Thy will be done."

This is the highest type of love. This is divine love. The ego cannot assert itself, for God alone is everywhere. The mind cannot modify itself into thoughts of sense-objects, for to him there is no object except God. Who is there to be

loved or hated? The mind cannot think of anything, for everything is God. The bhakta is therefore blissful at all times. Wherever the mind goes there it experiences samadhi, for it does not find an object of enjoyment.

God is filling every speck of space. The whole world is clothed with the glory of God. The saint and the sinner, the virtuous and the vicious, the good and the bad and the man and the animal are all forms of God. How can the mind deal with them in an undivine way?

There the mind experiences samadhi. The mind has consciousness, but it has no object. This is samadhi. Samadhi is thoughtless consciousness, objectless knowledge. This is para bhakti. This is one with vedantic realisation. Direct realisation and para bhakti are only two names for one and the same thing. The effect of both is annihilation of the ego or the destruction of the mind.

God, who is supremely powerful, supremely blissful, is pervading the entire atmosphere and the earth. He is the earth and the heaven. He is the father and the mother, brother and sister. He is the consummation of all love and aspiration, desire and ambition. He is the stoppage of all thoughts. He is the ideal to be attained.

Objective consciousness is dead when the presence of God is felt everywhere. The sense-objects are transformed into the glory of divinity, wife is no more an object of lust and money is not a property to be coveted. All is God and nothing but God. All are to be worshipped. "The ass, the dog and the labourer are to be saluted," said Sri Krishna to Uddhava, "for all is God."

'Control the mind, annihilate the ego,' is the essence of all yogas. Whatever be the name given to the yoga and whatever may be the methods employed therein, the ideal to be achieved is annihilation of the mind and the ego. Bhakti yoga is a very sweet and easy method. One has not got to curb his emotions nor run to the forests. He has to direct his emotions to God and to see God as present in the world. This is the essence of bhakti-sadhana. Bhakti is thus only a reflection of the love for the Self which the Upanishads declare. Only the names are different; one calls it Self, another calls it God. Names do not matter much. It is feeling that counts - and that is the same.

What is Bhakti?

Bhakti is the slender thread of love that binds the heart of a devotee with the lotus feet of the Lord. Bhakti is intense devotion and supreme attachment to God. It is supreme love for God. It is the spontaneous out-pouring of prem (divine love) towards the Beloved.

It is pure, unselfish, divine love; it is love for love's sake. There is not a bit of bargaining or expectation of anything here. This higher feeling is indescribable in words. It has to be sincerely experienced by the devotee. Bhakti is a sacred, higher emotion with sublime sentiments that unites the devotee with the Lord.

Earnestness and faith are incipient stages. They develop into bhakti later on. True prayer is hunger and thirsting of the heart. It links the individual soul and God by the thread of divine love. Faith and bhakti alone can bring salvation. Bhakti is burning faith in God.

Pure love and absolute self-surrender are its natural concomitants.

Bhakti originates from the companionship of saints. A moment's companionship with saints gives all that is desirable and good.

In Ananda Lahari, Sri Sankaracharya explained the nature of bhakti in a beautiful verse in which the bhakta's intense love for God is compared to five well known examples:

1. The ankola fruits fall to the ground and the seeds are liberated. But they (the seeds) are instantly and powerfully attracted to the trunk of the mother tree. They move in the direction of the trunk and stick to it.
2. The needle flies to the magnet, attracted by an irresistible force.
3. A devout and chaste wife lives constantly in the thought of her husband and his service.
4. A creeper restlessly searches for a tree to entwine itself and once it has caught a tree it winds itself round it inextricably, as it were, with great 'affection and love' Even if the creeper is violently pulled away from the tree, the instant it is released it will rush back to the tree and wind itself around it.
5. The river bounces towards the ocean. It surmounts all obstacles, and flows ceaselessly till it attains the ocean.

Such should be the devotion of the bhakta to the Lord: constant, intense and powerful.
Sandilya defines para bhakti as supreme attachment to God.
The Narada Pancharatra defines it as realisation of God alone as
'mine'
, accompanied by deep love for Him without attachment to any other object in the world. It is undivided love for God in which He alone is felt as 'mine'
A distinction is drawn by some later devotional literature between bhakti and prem. Bhakti is spontaneous attachment to God.
The devotee is entirely possessed by Him. He is absorbed in Him.
Prem is the crowning consummation of bhakti. It is the most concentrated love for God which is full of the most intense attachment, and which purifies the heart thoroughly. Love of God is the completion and perfection of devotion.
Self-surrender is the highest form of bhakti. Self-surrender is surrender of the ego or individuality. What remains is the Absolute of the vedantins. Thus there is no difference between vedanta and the highest form of bhakti. A bhakta surrenders the ego and a vedantin disintegrates the ego. In either case the ego is not there.
Their ideals are the same. Whether one eats rice or wheat, it is all the same. The purpose of both is to appease hunger. There is no quarrel between the two. Whether you follow bhakti or vedanta, the effect is the annihilation of the ego. This is the truth.
There are two varieties of bhaktas. The inferior type of bhakta feels that everything is God except himself. He feels that he is the only one who is not God, and all else is God. This is the lower bhakti, where the presence of the ego hampers the ultimate experience. The higher kind of bhakta feels that he himself is included in God and that he has no independent existence. His ego is rooted out completely. This is the realisation of para bhakti or vedanta. Here his emotions stop and he becomes a calm ocean without waves. His mind is stilled and it merges into the Universal Truth. This is the culmination of bhakti which supreme devotees like the gopis of Brindavan and Gouranga Mahaprabhu experienced.

Love for God should be unselfish. There should be no earthly motive behind love for God, otherwise it becomes only a modification of infatuation and delusion. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: "Four kinds of virtuous men worship Me, O Arjuna. They are the distressed (arta), the seeker of knowledge (jinasu), the seeker of wealth (artharthi) and the wise (jnani)." (VII:16). Arta, jujnasu and artharthi are all selfish bhaktas. They cannot have the highest fruit of devotion. They are deluded by earthliness. Only a jnani is a true selfless bhakta, flooded with the majesty and grandeur of emotionless peace. The highest kind of bhakta is one who wants nothing from God. He merely wants God. He says: "O Lord! I want Thee.

Nothing else do I want! What is there which I have to get after getting Thee, the source and the root of everything?" When wheat is obtained, halva, bread, paratha and all its modifications are obtained. When gold is obtained, all ornaments are obtained. When God is attained, everything else is attained. The devotee is lost in the consciousness of God. He has plunged into the ocean of bliss, he has taken a bath in the sea of nectar, he has drunk deep of the essence of immortality, he has become one in whom all desires have been fulfilled, for he has attained God.

The text book of the highest kind of bhakti is the Srimad Bhagavatam. It embodies the great ideals of renunciation, devotion and knowledge brought to a stage of unblemished perfection. This Purana, far above what a Purana is supposed to be like, is the cream of the devotional literature of the Hindus. It is the wealth of the lovers of God, it is a book of divine wisdom which advocates the path of non-action. Sri Krishna-Chaitanya (Gouranga) is said to have considered this work as the greatest of spiritual productions. It is a great authority on pure spiritual virtues as a means for attaining liberation. It has a fascination even for those who are keen on finding out its defects. The whole body of the work is completely saturated with high expositions of bhakti, vairagya (dispassion) and jnana — devotion, renunciation and wisdom. The ideal of renunciation and knowledge of Rishabhadeva, Jada Bharata and the brahmana of Avanti; the devotion of Dhruva, Prahlada and Ambarisha; the wisdom of Narada and Kapila and above all the immortal life and teachings of Bhagavan Sri Krishna to His devoted disciple Uddhava form the nucleus of the Srimad Bhagavatam.

It is a grave mistake to misrepresent and cavil at bhakti, for the true spirit of every religion implies the adoration and love of God and the desire for union with God. The highest conception of perpetual bliss is not mere prostration and service, but a loving union with the Eternal. In emphasising true devotion as a method for salvation it is not meant that service and love of humanity should be paid a deaf ear to; for all is God, and he who serves humanity serves God. He that loves his neighbour, loves God. The bhakta identifies himself with all the beings of the world, he feels the universe as a mere manifestation of God — which is nothing short of advaitic realisation. Those men who truly love God with sincere feeling cannot go astray. They do not perish. God illumines their intellect, and takes care of them at all times. Even the sinner is lifted up to the magnanimous height of emancipation. The kindness of God is immeasurable. The Bhagavad Gita and the Bhagavatam are witnesses to this fact. The bhakta will be guided by God, and illuminated with wisdom for the attainment of supreme blessedness!

What is Love?

Love is a mysterious divine glue that unites the hearts of all. It is a divine magical healing balm of a very high potency. A life without faith, love and devotion is a dreary waste. It is real death.
Love is divine. Love is the greatest force on earth. It is irresistible. It is love alone that can really conquer the heart of a man. Love subdues an enemy. Love can tame wild animals. Its power is infinite; its depth is unfathomable; its nature is ineffable; its glory is indescribable.
He who possesses even a ray of this is a veritable god on earth.
He is a mighty potentate. St. Paul says: *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, if I have no love I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, though I have all faith so that I could move mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing."*
Robert J. Ingersoll, the great philosopher, defines love as follows:

"Love is the only bow on life's dark cloud. It is the morning and the evening star. It shines upon the cradle of the babe and sheds its radiance upon the quiet tomb. It is the mother of art, inspirer of poet, patriot and philosopher. It was the first dream of immortality. It fills the world with melody, for music is the voice of love. It is the perfume of the wondrous flower — the heart. Without it we are less than beasts, but with it earth is heaven and we are gods in embryo."

Divine love is the sweet mystery of life. It is the greatest thing in the world. It is the greatest power on this earth. Love is vital to spiritual progress. Love all. Cherish love. Pour it forth on all.

Love is the crown of life. It is the greatest power. It is the true joy of every heart. Therefore cultivate love. True love will ever reign supreme in this universe. This is the truth.

Man cannot live by bread alone, but by love. Love is the best nourishment for life. It is Vitamin of vitamins. It is the sum total of all vitamins.

Love is all in all. Love is God. God is love. Love embraces everything. It abides in the heart. Love is the illumination. It has the power to make you wise, and stimulates your intuition.

The nearest approach to Truth or God is through love. Faith, devotion and love are immortal sisters. Love of God arises in a heart that is desireless. Love divine is the only solvent, the one great healer and forgiver.

Love is an actual substance you can use with confidence. It is a positive, concrete thing. Love vibrates in the form of service, charity, generosity and benevolence.

There is unity of life. Love of one's Self is true love of all life. All patriotism, love of one's nation, one's own race and one's own religion are but kinds of limited love. Human love is a stepping stone to divine or universal love.

Love all. Behold the one common consciousness that indwells all beings, that is imminent in all names and forms. Spread the message of divine love, light and worship wherever you go.

Love knows no fear. Love itself is the greatest power. It is the divine force in this universe. The purer you make your heart the greater will be the power of your love. To love God is to have a kindly nature, compassion, humanity, tolerance, justice and goodness.

Love the Eternal in every being. Do not make distinctions. He who loves becomes invincible. He is a mighty power on this earth.
He is a veritable god.
There is no virtue higher than love, there is no treasure higher than love, there is no knowledge higher than love, there is no dharma higher than love, there is no religion higher than love, because love is Truth, love is God. This world has come out of love, this world exists in love and this world ultimately dissolves in love. God is an embodiment of love. In every inch of His creation you can verily understand His love.
Live in love. Breathe in love. Sing in love. Eat in love. Drink in love. Talk in love. Pray in love. Meditate in love. Think in love.
Move in love. Die in love. Purify your thoughts speech and action in the fire of love. Bathe and plunge in the sacred ocean of love. Imbibe the honey of love and become an embodiment of love. Live to love. Live as love.

Love — The Goal of Life

True religion does not consist of ritualistic observances, baths and pilgrimages, but in loving all. Cosmic love is all-embracing and all-inclusive. No one is shut out from the warm embrace of pure love. It is wide enough to include the humblest of us - from the tiny ant to the mighty elephant, from the condemned prisoner to the mighty emperor, from the worst scoundrel to the reputed saint - on the surface of this earth. It is hatred that separates man from man, nation from nation and country from country. It is pride and egoism that divide one man from another man. Hatred, pride and egoism are mental creations. They are the products of ignorance only. They cannot stand before pure love. Just as darkness is dispelled by the penetrating rays of the burning sun, so also jealousy, hatred and egoism are dispelled by the rays of divine love.
It is easy to talk of universal love, but when you come to the practical field you obviously show signs of failure. Petty-mindedness of all sorts stands in the way. Old, wrong samskaras (innate tendencies) which you have created by your wrong thinking in the past act as stumbling blocks. If anybody talks ill of you and uses harsh words, at once you are thrown out of balance. You get

irritated and show an angry face and pay him in the same coin. Where is universal love? You do not like to part with your possessions when you see people in distress. A man who is struggling to develop cosmic love and realise God through love cannot keep anything for himself more than he actually needs for keeping life going. He will sacrifice even this little to serve a needy one, and undergo privation and suffering willingly with much pleasure. He will rejoice that God has given him a rare opportunity to serve Him. People talk of universal love but are very niggardly in action. They show only lip-sympathy and lip-love. This is absolute hypocrisy. Those who have developed pure, cosmic love are very, very rare in this world; but those who talk of universal love are plenty. He who tries to develop universal love should try to possess various sattvic virtues such as forgiveness, patience, perseverance, tolerance, generosity, straightforwardness, mercy, truthfulness, non-violence, chastity, egolessness, etc. He should serve humanity untiringly with a disinterested selfless spirit for many years. He has to kill his little self ruthlessly. He must bear calmly insults and injuries. Then only is there the prospect of cultivating cosmic love, otherwise it is all vain and flowery talk and idle-gossiping only. It is sugar written on paper, or a tiger embroidered in the carpet.

We have to gradually develop universal love through selfless service, satsang with mahatmas, prayer, recitation of guru mantras, etc. When the heart is contracted through selfishness in the beginning, man loves only his wife, children, a few friends and relatives. As he evolves he loves the people of his own district, then the people of his own province. Later on he develops love for men of his own country. Eventually he beings to love other people of different countries. In the long run he begins to love all. He develops universal love. All the barriers are broken asunder; heart has expanded to infinity. Satsang or association with sadhus and bhaktas helps a long way in developing universal love. In the company of saints, conversations on God take place. These are very pleasing to the heart and ears.

The deliverance of Jagai and Madhai and dacoit Ratnakar from a most sinful life they were leading affords striking examples of what the company of saints can do.

Pure divine love consciously felt and spontaneously directed towards all beings, including animals and birds, is indeed the direct result of one's vision or realisation of the Supreme Being. Let me repeat here the words of Lord Krishna: *"He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, of him I shall never lose hold and he shall never lose hold of me."* Bhagavad Gita (VI-30). *"He whose self is harmonised by Yoga sees the Self abiding in all beings and all beings in the Self; everywhere he sees the same."* Bhagavad Gita (VI-29). How can that yogi of pure love who has this grand vision of cosmic consciousness hate another, abuse another and show contempt and anger towards another? He is dear to God. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says: *"He who bears no ill-will to any being, friendly and compassionate, without attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving, he, My devotee, is dear to Me."* Bhagavad Gita (XII-13)

The saints and seers and prophets of the world have spoken of love as the end and aim or goal of life. The rasa-lila of Sri Krishna is full of divine love and divine mysteries. The stripping of clothes of the gopis means the destruction of egoism. Lord Krishna has preached love through His flute. Rajah Sibi gave from his own breast an equivalent weight of the pigeon's flesh to satisfy the appetite of the hawk. One great saint gave up his body to appease the hunger of a tiger. What noble souls! Lord Rama lived a life of love and showed love in every inch of his activity. My dear children of love, draw inspiration from their teachings. Tread the path of love, commune with God and reach the eternal abode of love. This is your highest duty. You have taken this body to achieve love which alone is the goal of life.

Devotion

Devotion is constant remembrance of God with one thought, with one ideal that flows like an unbroken stream of oil poured from one vessel to another. Devotion is regarded as a very efficacious method of attaining self-realisation. Devotion is ingrained in every being. Even an atheist is devoted to his atheism. Love dwells in the heart of every creature. Without love, life itself cannot exist. Even the most cruel-hearted men love something or other. As everything else, this love also needs cultivating. What is the difference between gardens and

forests? In forests too, there are flowers, there are fruit-bearing trees. Yet man is afraid to enter the forest. The earth is strewn with thorns; there are ominous looking bushes here and there that hide wild animals. The trees also grow haphazardly and a violent storm can produce a forest fire which destroys the entire forest. Not so in the case of a garden. The plants are beautifully and artistically laid out. There is order, harmony and pruning. The ground is swept clean and you take delight in walking over the lawns. All foul smelling things are removed from the garden and the sweet fragrance of the flowers wafts around.

Similar is the case with love. Love grows wildly in the ignorant man's heart. There is the luscious fruit of love in a corner of the heart; but the entire heart is strewn with thorns of hatred, jealousy and so many other vicious qualities that the charm of love is marred.

There are bushes of lust, anger and greed which hide within them the wildest animals. Love lies hidden far beneath and far beyond reach. It is as good as non-existent. But, in the case of a true devotee of the Lord, this love has been cultivated and the garden of his heart is cleared of the thorns of vicious qualities, of the bushes of lust, anger and greed. Love of God, which is the sweetest of fragrances, wafts from such a heart.

Turn your gaze within. Look into your own heart, Find out your love. Take firm hold of this love. Cultivate it consciously and deliberately. Find out the thorns and the bushes. By intelligent methods, throw them out. They have no place in the beautiful garden of your heart where the Lord dwells. See what great preparations you make for the reception of a king, a governor or a big leader! How nicely you sweep the roads, how beautifully you decorate your houses! How much more preparation is necessary for receiving in the temple of your heart the Lord of the universe.

When you eradicate the vices that lurk within and cultivate virtues, you will more fully manifest the hidden love. Therefore, cultivate devotion through japa, prayer, chanting the Lord's name, study of Ramayana, Bhagavatam and service of devotees. Bhakti or devotion subdues all lower passions and impulses and removes all obstacles. Bhakti is closely allied to both karma yoga and jnana (wisdom or knowledge). Devotion to God is the greatest of the

factors contributing to liberation. Therefore, cultivate devotion through the sublimation of your instinctive impulses and tendencies.

Divine transformation of the feelings and emotions should take place through japa, chanting, worship and meditation.

There is no knowledge without devotion. Devotion is the flower and knowledge is the fruit. Knowledge is an effervescence of devotion. Without knowledge there can be no faith. Without faith there will be no attachment to the Lord. Without attachment to the Lord, bhakti cannot endure.

Suppression or extinction of feelings or emotions cannot cultivate devotion. You can churn butter out of water and can extract oil out of sand, but without devotion you cannot cross over the ocean of births and deaths.

My child, you have been extremely fortunate in getting this human birth. Have intense devotion to God and commune with Him. Kindle the light divine within your heart and maintain the flame of devotion through your constant remembrance of the Lord.

It is true devotion that counts. It does not matter what deity you worship. Make your heart the field. Put the seed of devotion in the heart and irrigate it with the name of the Lord. You will reap a good harvest of eternal bliss.

The marks of devotion are love, faith, confidence, humility and service. God accepts all forms of prayer and worship through which men express their love and devotion to Him. Bhakti or devotion is the natural affinity between the devotee and God, just as the affinity between the seed and trunk of the ankola tree.

As iron touched by the touchstone becomes at once gold, as the water of the roadway mixed with that of the Ganges becomes pure, even so the heart of the devotee, greatly soiled though it be with great sins, becomes pure if attached with devotion to the Lord. To remove the afflictions and sorrows of the devotees gives the greatest happiness to the Lord.

No evil can touch the devotee whose devotion is sincere and whose faith is genuine. Put your little seed of faith in your heart.

Water it with love and devotion. Then the great tree of bhava samadhi (super-conscious state attained by bhaktas through intense divine emotion) will grow. Be regular in your prayer, japa and worship. Do not miss your prayer and japa for a single day.

Surrender to God is the way of salvation. Let the surrender be total, ungrudging and unconditional.

The devotee has no desire whatsoever for self enjoyment. His one keen longing is to love the Lord for the sake of love and to serve Him for His pleasure's sake. When a devotee develops such a love, the Lord becomes his slave.

The Lord certainly takes care of His tried bhakta. The Lord is the dearest friend of the true devotee. When your life's journey is about to come to an end you will get the company of a sadhu or a mahatma. In his company you will gradually develop devotion to the Lord, abandon attachment to worldly objects, draw inspiration and get elevation of mind. You will get attached to the lotus feet of the Lord. Through contact with a saint and through his blessings you will get firm conviction in the existence of God and firm faith in devotion to the Lord. You can have no bhakti without direct contact with mahatmas. You cannot free yourself from the fetters and ties of the world without the grace of saints. Even if you perform austerities, vedic sacrifice, charitable deeds and study of scriptures, you cannot attain God. Only through the company of saints will you get the passport to enter directly the kingdom of God.

There is no true happiness for him here or hereafter who has forgotten the Lord. There is no real peace for him who leads a selfish life and who separates himself from others on account of pride and egoism. Constant remembrance of the Lord will eradicate all miseries and sorrows and will confer immortality, bliss and peace.

Become a true seeker, humbler than the blade of grass that is trodden under your feet, more patient than the tree, not caring for honour from others, yet honouring all, singing always the name of the Lord and serving humanity — the Lord in manifestation. You will soon develop universal love. You will have darshan of the Lord, I assure you. This alone will give you immortality and eternal peace.

Pure Love

Pure unselfish love is prem, or devotion to the Lord. Pure love is a rare commodity. It has to be gradually cultivated. It endures or lasts forever. There cannot be any rupture or friction or weary face or frowning here. There is no decline or waning. It always increases like the waxing moon or the Ganges in the rainy season.

Pure love alone can remove all barriers that separate man from man. Pure love alone can eradicate all sorts of unreasonable dislikes and prejudices, intolerance and hatred. Pure love alone can unite a Jew and a Christian, a Hindu and a Muslim, a Catholic and a Protestant, a Brahmin and a non-Brahmin, a Vaishnavite and a Saivite, a Sanatanist and a Samajist, a Shakta and a Ramanandi, an Englishman and an Italian, a Chinese and a Japanese, a sannyasi and a vairagi, on a common platform and in the core of their hearts also.

Even best friends in the world fight amongst themselves. Even husbands and wives who are united for a long time quarrel among themselves. Even fathers and sons are at loggerheads. But there can never be any break in continuity in pure love. Pure love is, divine.

Pure love is God. God is pure love. In pure love there can never be any tinge or microscopic trace of selfishness. That is the reason why it endures forever. Divine love is a mighty power. It indeed exercises a wonderful power over the beings that come under its masterful influence. Love is a great leveller. The lover and the beloved are placed on the same level. All differences between the two vanish.

There is no power on earth greater than love. Rules are broken by the power of love. Love is the immediate way to the kingdom of God or the vast domain of perennial peace and joy. It is the life-principle of creation and the highest expression of soul-force. It is the sum-total of all the duties of religion. It is the magic wand in the hand of a devotee with which he conquers the whole world. It has been the driving force behind Mira, Radha, Tukaram, Tulsidas, Gouranga, Jesus and the God-intoxicated Sufis - Mansoor and Shams Tabriez. Love is the marriage of the individual soul with the supreme Soul. The first condition of union with God is a state of love. Divine love fills the heart and overflows to others.

'Love God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself' — this is the secret of God-realisation. Love breaks down all barriers. It is an 'open sesame' to an infinite realm of bliss immortal.

St. John says: "He that loveth his brother abideth in the Light. Let *us neither move in word, nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth. If we love one another, God abideth in us and His love is perfected in us. He that abideth in love abideth in God and God abideth in him."* Love is thus the clear and open way to God, so simple and so perfect that many fail to find it, seeking instead some more elaborate road.

Love brings extreme satisfaction. When the devotee comes face to face with the Lord his heart is filled with supreme bliss and joy. All his desires are gratified. Hear the words of Dhruva: "Just as a man looking for a piece of glass hits upon a sparkling gem, so also O Lord have I, by practising tapas (austerities) in quest of a royal throne, attained Thee. I am perfectly satisfied. I do not want any boon." The path of love is the right royal road that leads to the abode of immortality and eternal bliss where time cannot exercise its destructive power, where Maya (the Lord's illusive power) cannot show her face. It is a clear and open way to God. Divine love frees the devotee from the round of births and deaths. Beatitude is love's handmaid. Love is the highest attainment.

Cling like a bee to the lotus feet of the Lord. Find out the path that leads to love. Taste the honey of divine love. Become an embodiment of pure love. Live in love, move in love, have your very being in love.

Through iron determination, strong will, patience, perseverance and enquiry you can conquer all obstacles quite easily.

The grace of the Lord will descend upon you if you are sincere, my dear friends.

Selfish Love

Love between husband and wife is physical, selfish and hypocritical. It is not constant. It is carnal passion only. It is sexual appetite. It is tinged with lower emotions. It is finite — but divine love is infinite, pure, all-pervading and ever-lasting. In divine love there is no question of divorce.

There is no internal union between husband and wife in reality in the vast majority of cases. Savitri and Satyavan, Atri and Anasuya are very, very rare in these days. As husbands and wives are externally united only for selfish ends there is only some show of smile and external love. It is all mere show only. As there is no real union in their heart of hearts, there are always some kind of friction, rupture, wry faces and hot words in every house. If the husband does not supply his wife with the necklace and silk sari she demands and does not take her to the cinema, there will be regular tug-of-war and fighting in the house. Can you call this real love? It is mercenary, commercial, business. On account of lust men have lost their integrity, independence and dignity. They have become slaves of women. What a pitiable spectacle you see! The key is with the wife, and even for two annas the husband has to stretch his hands to her. Still he says under delusion and intoxication of passion: "I have a sweet, loving wife. She is really a Mira. She can be really worshipped."

Yoga of Universal Love

The delicious fruit-juice that quenches your thirst, the palatable vegetables and food that appease your hunger; the silken robes that you wear; the sun, the moon and the stars that illumine this world; the rivers, the mountains and the oceans that bespeak of divine glory, divine beauty and divine splendour; the various kinds of flowers that blossom out in your gardens; the music that lulls you to an agreeable slumber; the scents that give you pleasure; nay, each and everything that gives you happiness and joy has come out of the power of God. When you are tired at night He envelops this world with darkness to lull you to rest and takes you to His sweet bosom of love to refresh and soothe your tired nerves. At night He sheds light in the dark to show you the path, by taking the form of stars. God is indeed an ocean of love! Have you understood the mystery of His creation? Have you realised His magnanimous nature and wonderful love towards His creatures? He serves you in the form of attendants and nurses. He treats you in the form of doctors. He has taken the form of herbs and medicinal plants to serve your needs. He is the spoon. He is the medicine. He is the patient. He is the doctor. He is the disease. He is the

microbe. This great mystery will be unravelled to you when your mind is absorbed in Him through intense and supreme divine love.

To love man is to love God alone. Man is the true image of God. He is His limb. In the Bhagavad Gita you will find: *"A portion of mine own Self transformed in the world of life into an immortal spirit, drawes around itself the senses, of which the mind is the sixth, veiled in matter."* (XV-7.).

Love is the fulfilling of the law. The aim of charity, social service, altruism, humanitarianism, socialism, bolshevism and so many other 'isms' is to develop this universal love and to expand one's heart. There is no power on earth greater than love. You can conquer this world even if you have a ray of this divine commodity which is absolutely free from even a tinge of selfishness. Pure love is a rare gift of God. It is the fruit of one's untiring service of humanity and incalculable virtuous actions in several incarnations. It is a rare commodity indeed.

The learned talk of God but the poor love Him in their hearts.

Beyond logic, beyond intellect, beyond reason is the feeling of love and the embodiment of love, God. Argue not. Realise Him. Talk to Him in the language of the heart.

Love for the world is not consistent with love for the Absolute. Do not gauge the Lord's mercy and love by the material prosperity He may give to you. Infinitely more valuable is the spiritual treasure He bestows upon his true devotees. Love is the dewdrop of divine grace.

Pure love is a great leveller. It brings equality and cosmic vision. Mira, Gouranga, Tukaram, Ramdas and Kabir have all tasted this universal love. In the one embrace of universal love all differences and petty, illusory distinctions melt away. Love alone reigns supreme.

Universal love terminates in advaitic (non dual) unity of oneness or upanishadic consciousness of seers and sages.

Cosmic love is the threshold to the limitless domain of the bliss of Brahman. Cosmic love is synonymous with supreme self-sacrifice or egolessness. In all beings lives the one God, the Supreme Being, the eternal Lord. Therefore bow to all beings with reverence, faith and devotion. Feel that another's difficulty is your own difficulty.

Relieve him of his difficulty. Then alone will you grow in cosmic love.

Stand up, dear friends. Struggle hard. Plod on. Annihilate egoism, selfishness, pride and hatred. Serve. Love. Give. Have mercy. Control the senses. Do not expect even gratitude, approbation or admiration for the services that you render.
Consecrate everything at the lotus feet of the Lord. Have the motto: 'Love for love's sake. Work for work's sake'.
Dear brothers, if you wish to attain perfection, if you wish to enjoy infinite peace and bliss, if you wish to become immortal, develop pure divine love, cultivate universal love by serving and loving all, for love alone will bring you liberation. Love alone can carry you to the other shore of bliss and immortality, the shore which is beyond grief, pain and sorrow.

GOD EXITS

Atheists want proofs for the existence of God. Can they give proof for the non-existence of God? No one has succeeded in showing proofs that God does not exist.
Even many educated men now say boldly that there is no God, that everything in this world goes on and evolves according to definite laws. Can law arise by itself? Can any law come out of nothing? Surely there must be an ultimate cause. That is God. That is the supreme Brahman or the Absolute. God is self existent Being.
He is infinitely powerful, wise and good.
The world is an effect and so must have an efficient cause. A finite agent cannot create this universe with its variety, vastness and orderliness. The efficient cause must be an agent who possesses infinite knowledge and power. Such an omniscient and omnipotent being is God.
The insentient engine of a railway train cannot move without the intelligent driver. Even so, this insentient body-engine cannot move without the intelligent driver - God or Ishvara. From the existence of the body you can infer the existence of the hidden driver of the body-engine.

The existence of God (Brahman) or the Self is determined or indicated by the existence of the limiting adjuncts, viz: body, mind, prana and the senses, because there must be self-consciousness behind their activities.

The reality of God is His universal Existence (Sat). The very fact that one is aware of one's existence and says 'I exist' proves that God exists. The existence revealed through T' is the existence of the eternal Spirit. 'I' is neither body nor mind nor speech, but the Atman within.

Pleasure is due to virtuous actions and pain is due to vicious actions. Virtue and vice constitute adrishta (unseen potency). The various experiences of man are due to the unseen potency. But this is a blind force. There must be an intelligent director to guide this potency. That intelligent director is God.

Karma or action is non-sentient. Who is the dispenser of fruits of actions? Who fixes the span of life? Some live for 120 years while some others live for only 10 years. How do you explain these variegated appearances of this universe? Some are born decrepits, some are robust; some are kings and earls and millionaires, some are peasants and beggars; some are born blind, deaf and dumb; some are beautiful, some are ugly; some are fools, some are intellectual giants and sages; some are rogues and dacoits, some are martyrs and honest men. The theory of Karma and the presence of God who awards fruits of actions with justice to everybody, can alone satisfy the above questions.

There is one omniscient Lord, who is the dispenser of the fruits of the actions of the jivas, who fixes their span of life in accordance with the nature of their actions, who knows the exact relation between actions and their fruits. As the law of Karma is insentient, it certainly cannot dispense the fruits of their actions.

Whether the owl accepts the presence of light or not, there is always light. Whether you accept the existence of God or not, He always exists. Things exist by the light of God. He is ever shining in the three periods of time. He exists before you begin to search for Him. He is closer to you than your breath and nearer to you than your hands and feet. God is revealed through the laws of nature and the splendour of human intellects.

When you do an evil action, you are afraid. Your conscience pricks you. This also proves that God exists and witnesses all your thoughts and actions.

It is by the power of God alone that all spiritual people do their spiritual activities in this world of pairs of opposites.

Can you tell me, friend, is there anyone on the surface of the earth who is not afraid of death? Is there anyone who is not uttering the name of the Lord when he is in serious difficulty, when his life is trembling in the balance or when he is in acute agony? Why then, O sceptics, do you deny the existence of God? You yourself admit His existence when you are in trouble.

The existence of God can be inferred by certain empirical facts or common experiences in daily life. A certain lady had a fall from the third storey. She should have received serious injuries, but she was miraculously saved. She herself revealed: "I felt the warm embrace of some invisible hands. Some mysterious power saved me." Instances like this are not uncommon.

Sometimes you are in a peculiar dilemma or pressing pecuniary difficulty. Help comes to you in a mysterious manner. You get the money just in time. Every one of you might have experienced this.

You exclaim at that moment in joy: "God's ways are mysterious indeed. I have now got full faith in God. Up to this time I had no faith in God."

An advocate had no faith in God. He developed double pneumonia. His last breath stopped. His wife, son and relatives began to weep. But he had a mysterious experience. The messengers of Yama (the god of death) caught hold of him and brought him to the court of Lord Yama. Lord Yama said to his messengers: "This is not the man I wanted. You have brought the wrong person. Send him off." He began to breathe after one hour. He actually experienced that he left the body, went to the court of Yama and again re-entered his physical body. This astonishing experience changed his entire nature. He developed intense faith in God and became a religious man.

Another advocate had a similar experience but there is some change in this case. He was also an atheist. He was brought by the messengers to the court of Yama. This advocate said to Yama, "I have not finished my work in the physical plane. I still have to do more useful work. Kindly spare my life now." His boon was granted. He was struck with wonder by this strange experience. His nature also was entirely changed. He left the legal practice at once.

He is devoting the remaining portion of his life in selfless service and meditation.

You find that even the world's best doctors fail to cure a dying king. You might have also heard of many instances where patients ailing from the worst type of diseases are cured miraculously when even the ablest doctors have declared the case hopeless. This itself is a clear proof that there is the divine hand behind all cures.

Who is God?

It is obvious that ever since the beginning of creation some miraculous power has been at work in every clime and at every age, and that it will continue to work forever. You can call this mysterious power the all-pervading Intelligence or by any other name choose. Call Him Father in Heaven, Jehovan, Allah, Substance, Essence, Brahman or Ahur-Mazda. It is all the same.

This Intelligence is Truth. This Intelligence is pure love or God. God is the embodiment of wisdom. He is full of knowledge. He is independent. He exists in the past, present and future. He is unchanging. He is beyond speech and mind. He is sat-chit-ananda or existence-knowledge-bliss-absolute. He is the supreme Being. He is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent.

God is the absentee landlord of this world. He is the wire-puller of all these physical bodies of beings. He is the inner Ruler of all beings. He sees without eyes, speaks without tongue, hears without ears and thinks without mind. He is ineffable, incomprehensible, immutable, simple. He is changeless, and yet man offers prayers to change Him. He is incomprehensible, and yet man interprets Him.

God is Time. He is the Lord of Death. He is death unto Death itself. God is free, immortal, perfect, pure, eternal, all-pervading, self-existent and self-luminous. God is the absolute single homogeneous essence or Being in which there is no internal diversity. He is the friend of all creatures. He is the essence of love. He is the sustainer of the world. He is the most compassionate to all those who pray to Him with a sincere heart.

God is the manifest and the hidden. He is the infallible Truth, the everlasting Life. God is the way, the course, the goal, the truth and life. Truth, or God, is one without a second. There is no use in arguing whether God is personal or impersonal. He is both. He is above the personal and impersonal aspects also.

God is Love. God is light of lights. He is an embodiment of eternal bliss, supreme peace and wisdom. He is all-merciful. He has neither beginning nor end. The Bhagavad Gita styles Him as Purushottama (the Lord of the universe) or supreme Purusha (being) or Maheshwara (great Lord). He knows everything in detail.

He is the support for this world, body, mind, senses and prana.

Without Him not an atom can move. He is the womb for the Vedas. Indra (chief of the celestials), Agni (the fire god), Varuna (the water god), Vayu (the wind god) and Yama (the god of death) are His assistants. Earth, water, fire, air and ether are His five powers. Maya is His illusive power. Earth denotes His all-supporting nature; water proclaims the message of His purity and sanctity; fire indicates His self-luminous nature; air signifies His omnipotence and ether heralds His all-pervading nature. Maya is under His perfect control. This is the subtle body of Ishvara.

Many Gods: Different Aspects of One Reality

Hindus worship many gods, but they are all different aspects of the one Reality. There are many gods in the Vedas. (In the scriptures of other religions they are known as angels.) The Upanishads profess only one God - Brahman. God is certainly one; He has no second. The absolute Reality must be one; there cannot be two absolutes.

Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are three aspects of God. Brahma is the creative aspect; Vishnu is the preservative aspect; Siva is the destructive aspect. There are three other aspects. Virat is the manifested aspect; Hiranyagarbha is the immanent aspect; Ishvara is the causal aspect. Virat is the sum total of all physical bodies;

Hiranyagarbha is the sum total of all minds - He is the cosmic mind; Ishvara is the sum total of all causal bodies (karana sarira).

Creation, preservation, destruction, veiling and grace are the five kinds of activities of God.

Bhaga (in Bhagavan) signifies the qualities of God: wisdom, dispassion, fame, wealth, divine powers, omnipotence and righteousness.

Prana, faith, sky, air, fire, water, earth, senses, mind, food, strength, penance, mantras, actions, the world and name are the sixteen rays according to the Prasnopanishad.

The Supreme Creator

A glance at any object around you reminds you of its Creator. The design, beauty, order and harmony in the world cannot be satisfactorily explained except by postulating a world-governing intelligence. The moving force behind the atoms is not material, but a world-governing intelligence - God. Just as there is an intelligent artist for an art, so also there must be an intelligent artist and designer for this world. This world is not a disordered heap of things thrown together by accident. It contains various beautiful patterns which are the results of intelligent design. This intelligent magnanimous designer is God.

There is a display of intelligence in every inch of creation. Who pumps blood in the arteries? Who converts food into chyle and red-coloured blood? Who does the peristalsis in the bowels and stomach and sends the faecal matter to the rectum and anus? Who shuts the eyelids to prevent dust from falling into the delicate eyes? Who gave the intelligence to the cells and glands to secrete the semen, milk, bile, saliva, gastric juice etc., from the blood? Who gave intelligence and power to spermatozoa to move, unite with the ovum in the womb and then develop into a foetus? From where does this minutest, subtlest substance called the jiva, as fine as the ten-thousandth part of the point of a hair, derive the capacity to assume gradually the features, complexion and shape of its parents? What is the power that sustains it and helps its growth in the mother's womb?

Who arranges for milk in the mother's breast before the child is born? Who provides food for the little frog living hidden in between the strata of rocks? Who clothed the fruits with skin to prevent contamination from outside? Who divided the seasons? Who made the water warm beneath the ice to enable fish to live comfortably in the icy regions of the Himalayas in Gauri Kund and other places?

Who has combined inert nitrogen with the oxygen gas?

At whose command does the sun rise punctually in the morning and set in the evening? The sun is miles and miles away from the earth. What a great wonder it is that from such a long distance the sun is able to send light, heat, energy and vitality to all beings inhabiting this fair earth. There are countless millions of suns much larger than the one we see but which appear to us as tiny stars on account of their being remoter than the sun with which we are acquainted. It takes millions of years for the light to reach this earth from these stars. Velocity of light is 186,000 miles per second. Light from distant stars has not yet reached us even now. What a marvel it is! All these stars, planets and satellites are revolving in the sky in fixed orbits from day to day, month to month and year to year under immutable definite laws.

Who supplies water to the trees, flowers, various shrubs, etc.,
that are found in the forests? Who is this unseen, untiring gardener who works without wages or any sort of remuneration? Who gives nourishment in time to tigers, lions, birds, fishes, plants, insects and worms? How is it that only human beings are born of human beings, birds of birds, beasts of beasts, tigers of tigers, dogs of dogs, horses of horses, elephants of elephants, ants of ants, bears of bears, mules of mules, an exact copy of their parents in every respect? From a tiny seed there springs a huge banyan tree that can give shelter to thousands of persons! From a tiny seed there comes out a big mango tree that gives abundance of luscious fruits! What is that power that supports and nourishes these trees? What is that hidden and miraculous power that brings out a huge form with hair, fingers, toes, nose, teeth, ears, legs, thighs etc., out of one drop of semen?

What is that power that brings a mighty tree with foliage, flowers, twigs and fruits out of a tiny seed?

Again how wonderful is the human machine! How harmoniously all the organs work in unison in the economy of nature. In summer the skin works energetically to throw off all impurities of the body. In winter the kidneys work hard to eliminate the impurities of the blood and to relieve the over-worked skin. The endocrine glands — pituitary, pineal and adrenals - work in perfect harmony in manufacturing the internal secretions to help the metabolic process of the body and its growth and structure.

It is a great marvel to see the working of the nervous system under the control of the brain and the movement of the afferent and efferent impulses through the spinal cord. There is a magnificent electric battery within with switchboards and wires. The operator is the inner Ruler who controls and supervises everything. He is the supervisor, permitter and the great Lord. Look again at the heart and lungs which work under the direct control of the brain! How wonderful are these vital organs of life.

Can any scientist manufacture any of these organs, tissues, fibres, tendons or cells in his boasted intellect? How harmoniously the different systems of the body work without any rest, murmur or grumble! How very beautifully the different centres in the brain - such as the vision-centre, the auditory-centre, the centre for smell and so on - do their functions! One is struck with awe and amazement as he begins to think seriously on the working of this delicate human machinery. To think that this most wonderful mechanism is the result and product of a fortuitous combination of particles of matter or atoms is simply absurd and illogical indeed! It has doubtless been moulded and fashioned by some architect who is infinitely more skilful, more intelligent and more powerful than these ordinary architects who build mansions and palaces and bungalows. Remember this point well. That architect is God, or Ishvara or the Creator. Call Him by whatever name you may please, it does not matter much.

Then again look at the miraculous powers of the mind. In the Kena Upanishad the first verse begins: "Who is the director of the mind?" There is the play of divine hand here also. Can my brother psychologist manufacture a mind in his boasted laboratory? Look at the various faculties of the mind - power of discrimination, power of judgement, power of reasoning, retentive power, power of imagination, cogitative faculty, power of reflection, and so on and so forth! No one but God can create such a powerful and miraculous mind.

God can be realised by meditation with a pure one-pointed heart. O my dear friends, will you still remain sceptics, materialists and atheists, or will you become spiritual giants? Bow your head with humility and sincerity at the lotus feet of the all-wise Creator.

You will get His grace. Do not delay even a second to approach Him. Purify. Pray. Sing. Meditate. Realise.

God Indwells Everything

God is the subtle essence underlying all things. God is the salt of life. He is the source of life and bliss, He is all in all, He is indivisible, undefinable. He is the only reality. His light pervades every being.

God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

God is the source of strength, of life. He is the abode of bliss, peace and light.

Everything in this world is a manifestation of the Lord. All joys and sufferings are also the Lord's own manifestation.

God has hands and feet everywhere. He has eyes, heads, mouths and ears everywhere. Whatever you taste is God, whatever you smell is God, whatever you feel is God. This is the manifested aspect (virat). The physical body belongs to virat (the physical world that we see). The astral body belongs to hiranyagarbha (cosmic intelligence; cosmic prana; the sum total of all the subtle bodies). The causal body belongs to Ishvara (the unmanifested). Where is this 'I' now?

Within everyone is the divine spark. Look above the beauty of the objects to the beauty of the cause which brought these beautiful objects into being. Feel God. See Him in the rising and setting sun.

See Him in the little flowers. Talk to Him in the flowers and have silent communion with Him. His secrets or laws will be revealed unto you.

God is the only solace of life. God is with you wherever you are.

He sees your thoughts and actions. He is the silent and unseen listener to the surgings of your mind. God is the head of your house.

He sees and hears everything that you do and utter. He is your unseen guest at every meal.

Just as oil is hidden in seed, butter in milk, mind in brain, foetus in the womb, sun behind the clouds, fire in wood, sugar or salt in water, scent in buds, sound in gramophone records, gold in quartz and microbes in blood, so also is God hidden in all these beings and forms. Just as you see the bacilli of cholera, typhoid fever, consumption or any other disease for that matter through the powerful lens of a microscope, so also can you see God through the eye of intuition (jnana chaksu).

God is immanent in this world. He is also transcendent. He is both immanent and transcendent. God creates the world and remains as its inner ruler. He also rises above the world. He is never involved in the world process. God is the 'unmoved Mover'. He simply gazes at prakriti (Nature) and it moves and does everything.

Though the thief may take the help of the moonlight for the purpose of stealing, the moon is not in any way to be held responsible for the thief's act or its result. Even so, God is not affected by the egoistic actions of man, though He gives light to the ego.

The first sloka of the Isavasya Upanishad begins with: "All these movable and immovable objects are indwelt by the Lord." In the Katha Upanishad you will find: "This God is hidden in all beings. " He who has a sharp, subtle, pure intellect can see Him.

God is hiding Himself within these objects. He is remaining within these objects. He is the Indweller and interpenetrating presence or essence or substance, the intelligent and creative principle of the universe itself.

God is the soul of all. He dwells in your heart. He is in you and you are in Him. He is quite close to you. You were thinking in the beginning that He could be found only in Mount Kailas, Rameshvaram, Mecca, Jerusalem, in the sky or in heaven. You had very vague ideas. This body is His moving temple. The sanctum sanctorum is the chambers of your own heart. Close your eyes. Withdraw your senses from the sensual objects. Search for Him there with one-pointed mind, devotion and pure love. You will surely find Him. He is waiting there with outstretched arms to embrace you. If you cannot find Him there you cannot find Him anywhere else.

Mystery and Glory of God

God has no purpose. He is not bound by any action, just as the sun is not affected by the activities of the people of this world.

There is a moral and spiritual order through which is fulfilled the will of the Lord in this world. Justice, love and goodness are expressions of the divine will. God's knowledge is eternal, complete and perfect. Who can know the will of God? He who knows God alone can know His will. God and His will are one.

God has created not only the world but also time along with it.
God is both the lover and the beloved. His love is beauty and His beauty is love.
The Lord is the supreme Healer. He is the divine Indweller in all medicines. He is the changeless perfection which is the essence of all religion.
He desires and wills but does not experience pleasure or pain.
He is untouched by evil. He is free from hate. God joins in Himself contraries and contradictions.
Mysterious, ever eluding comprehension, ever receding further and further, subtle, inexpressible, invisible and yet all-pervading; knowable through intuition, devotion and purity: such is the Lord of the universe.
God is beyond the reach of senses, He is beyond the reach of speech and intellect; but He is obtainable by meditation and can be realised by direct perception.
Elusive is the nature of the Lord. He is nearest to the sincere, pure-hearted devotee, but farthest from the passionate and the ignorant.
Even a devoted man disappoints you, but there is one who never disappoints you. He is God, the Indweller of your heart. He acts out of compassion for the individual souls. His sole purpose is to see that His creatures evolve spiritually. He has been described as
'Ocean of Mercy'
His mercy flows like the streams of the Ganges
and the Yamuna. He is depicted as having sold Himself to His devotees, so to say. He willingly suffers endless pain in the eyes of the world in order to alleviate the sufferings of His devotees. He bears as an ornament, the scar left on His chest by the kick of Bhrigu. He ran with lightning speed to save the modesty of Draupadi from being outraged. He apologised and begged pardon of Prahlada in the following words: "O dear, you were too tender of age and too delicate of body to stand the terrible tortures inflicted on your person by your hot-headed father. A parallel of his atrocious deeds I have never seen. Pray, therefore, excuse me if I was late in coming to your rescue."

The One and Only Reality

God is the ultimate Reality. He alone is real. There is nothing worth coveting in this world. God is the centre of the whole creation.
He is the first cause.
God is the designer and architect of this world. This universe is His handiwork. This world of ours and this world-play enacted thereon is a show, whose showman is the Almighty God.
He is one without a second. He is the creator, the evolver, the almighty, the all-knowing, the just, the beneficent, the merciful, the guide, the helper. He is the supreme creator, master, governor, director, benefactor and patron.
God has many aspects; He is formless, too. The universe is a part of God, and yet He is beyond the universe.
God is the pivot of everything. He is your sheet-anchor. The supreme source of life is God. He has become all, He permeates all, He verily is all in all. He is the subtle essence that underlies phenomenal existence. He is the source, substratum and ultimate goal of life. The existence of things is by the light of God. If you exist, then God also exists. If the drop exists, then the ocean of existence, knowledge, bliss - sat-chit-ananda — also exists.

Maya

Maya is the illusive power of Brahman; the veiling and the projecting power of the universe. It is so powerful that it deludes you every moment. Every moment it makes you feel that there is pleasure only in the sense-objects, and nowhere else. You mistake pain for pleasure. This is the work of maya. Beware. Remember, this world is full of birth, death, old age, disease and misery. There is no pleasure in these infinite objects. You can have bliss in the Infinite alone.

Why Should We Believe in God?

To know God is the real duty of life. Belief in God is an indispensable requisite for every human being. Owing to force of ignorance (avidya), pain appears as

pleasure. The world is full of miseries, troubles, difficulties and tribulations. The world is a ball of fire. The mind charged with likes, dislikes, anger and jealousy is a blazing furnace.

We have to free ourselves from birth, death, old age, disease and grief. This can only be done by faith in God. There is no other way. Money and power cannot give us real happiness. Even if we exercise sovereignty over the whole world we cannot be free from care, worry, anxiety, fear, disappointment etc. It is only faith in God and the consequent God-realisation through meditation that can give us real eternal happiness and free us from all kinds of fear and worries which torment us at every moment. Faith in God will force us to think of Him constantly and to meditate on Him, and will eventually lead us on to God-realisation.

Belief in God and God-realisation will give us supreme peace.

In that peace comes the extinction of all pains. We will no longer be bewildered. We will be released from the bondage of actions. We will become immortal. We will obtain eternal divine wisdom and reach a place whence there is no return to this world of miseries. Our sins being dispelled by divine wisdom, our minds will ever remain balanced. We will never rejoice on obtaining what is pleasant nor feel sorry on obtaining what is unpleasant. We will have an icy cool mind. We will be ever established in the divine consciousness. We will get happiness exempt from decay. We will become one with God (samadhi) and get eternal infinite unbroken bliss. When we are established in the divine consciousness we will not be shaken even by heavy sorrow. We will get happiness beyond the reach of senses (supreme bliss).

Lord Krishna assures us in the Bhagavad Gita that He will give us full security if we worship Him with unswerving devotion and undivided attention. He gives us the yoga of discrimination to enable us to reach Him easily. Out of pure compassion for us He destroys the ignorance-born darkness by the shining lamp of wisdom. He speedily lifts us from the ocean of samsara if we fix our minds on Him steadily with devotion and faith. We will cross over the three qualities and, liberated from birth, death, old age and sorrow, drink the nectar of immortality. By devotion and faith we will know Him in essence and will enter into His very being. Through His grace we will overcome all obstacles.

If we have no faith in God we will be born again in this world and will undergo miseries. The ignorant, faithless, doubting self goes to destruction. He cannot enjoy the least happiness. Neither in this world, nor that beyond is there happiness for the doubting self.

Those who have no faith in God do not know what is right and what is wrong. They have lost the power of discrimination. They are untruthful, proud and egoistic. They are given to excessive greed, wrath and lust. They hoard up money by unlawful means. They become men of demoniacal nature, committing various sorts of atrocious crimes. They have no ideals for their lives. They are thrown into demoniacal wombs. They sink into the lowest depths, deluded birth after birth.

When I heard of the following marvellous incident from others and read it in a book, it gave me a very strong conviction of the divine existence and a divine eternal life where all sorrows melt, all desires are satisfied and one gets supreme bliss, supreme peace and supreme knowledge:

Some one hundred and fifty years ago there lived a very famous yogi-jnani by name Sadasiva Brahmendra Saraswati in Nerur near Karur in the district of Trichinopoly, South India. He is the author of Brahma Sutra Vritta and Atma-Vidya Vilasa and various other books. He has done innumerable miracles. Once when he was absorbed in samadhi on the banks of the river Kaveri he was carried away by the flood and thrown somewhere else. He was deeply buried underneath the sand. Labourers went to plough the fields. They hit against the head of the yogi and some blood oozed out. They dug and were greatly astonished when they found the yogi seated in samadhi.

On another occasion, as an avadhoota (naked ascetic) he entered the zenana of a Mohammedan chief. The chief was quite enraged at him and cut off one of his arms. Sadasiva Brahmendra walked away without uttering a word and without showing any sign of pain. The chief was greatly astonished at this. He thought that the sage must be a mahatma, a superhuman being. He repented and followed him to apologise. Sadasiva never knew that his arm was cut off. When the chief narrated to him what had happened in the zenana, Sadasiva excused the chief and simply touched his maimed shoulder. He had a fresh arm. He was quite unconscious of the world. Ordinary people yell out even when there is a pinprick in their bodies, but he did not feel a bit when his arm

was cut off. He was absorbed in divine consciousness. He was one with the Divine.
The life of this sage made a very deep impression on me.

Union with God

The goal of life is Self-realisation or union with God. If you realise God you are rich, you have enough, you are wise, you are all-powerful. God is certainly knowable and realisable in and through human life. To know and to feel the oneness of God is to be one with God.
God-realisation alone can put an end to the wheel of birth and death with its concommitant evils such as birth, growth, disease, death, sorrow, pain, etc. Eternal happiness can be had only in God.
That is the reason why sages and saints and scriptures make a very emphatic statement and lay great stress on the importance and necessity of God-realisation.
Bhakti or devotion can help one in the attainment of this God-realisation. So I have described in this book the various methods to cultivate bhakti and come face to face with God and taste the nectar of God-consciousness which alone is the aim of human life and human endeavour.
In the Katha Upanishad it is said: "Not by arguments, not by extreme intelligence, not by the voracious and wide study of scriptures will you reach God. You can reach Him by sincere sadhana or spiritual practices."
People worship God differently, but He is always one. The oneness of God is acknowledged by all the schools of mysticism. But, just as when at home you wear a towel only and when you come out you put on a collar, tie, coat, etc., even so God is without attributes when He is alone, and when He manifests Himself He puts on these various illusory dresses of names and forms and becomes saguna Brahman (with attributes) for the sake of pious meditation of bhaktas. God has no attributes in the ultimate analysis, but all positive attributes are associated with Him so that man may realise Him through the means of all that is positive, virtuous, noble and everlasting. How kind He is! He is the ocean of mercy and love.

The wise do not regard God as a person. Truth is God for them, love is God for them; but without some sort of association, meditation on God cannot be effective. Hence there are many means which portray Him in various ways, that help one to reach Him.

Image worship is a stepping stone to worship of the Infinite. The difference of conception and approach to God is due to historical and traditional causes, and also due to temperamental diversity.

The way to God is through the heart. God-realisation is achieved through perfection of the lower nature and its transmutation into higher divine nature. God can be realised through faith, devotion and meditation. Only a bhakta or a devotee can have the vision of God. God reveals Himself in the form in which the devotee loves Him most. The devotion of the bhakta and the intensity of his concentration on a particular form cause its materialisation either in dream, or in meditation or even while awake.

There are no aliens in the dominion of God. All are equal to Him. He cannot be comprehended, but can be realised. Within the temple of your own heart is the source of life, wisdom, bliss, peace and joy; within you is hidden God, the mysterious Almighty One.

God is your sole refuge, benefactor, and supreme master. God is the highest, and to Him we all must return. God dwells within you. Seek Him now. He is the ultimate Existence, or the supreme

'Sat'. He is beginningless. He is the source or origin for the universe. He is the destroyer of ignorance of men or darkness of samsara (worldly existence). In Him the wheel of samsara revolves.

Take refuge in Him. Utter with intense feeling and sincerity, "O God! I surrender myself at Thy lotus feet." You will then get descent of His Grace.

Turn Back to God

Your home is God; your goal is God; your friend is God; your centre is God and your ideal is God.

Turn back to God. You will realise everlasting bliss. In returning to God and resting in Him, you will be saved.

As the lamp cannot burn without oil, so also man cannot live without God. God is here now all the time. He is with you, within you, inspiring and lifting you up. Withdraw. Aspire. Meditate.
Realise.
Without God life is purposeless. Without God virtue, holiness and spiritual values are mere shells without content. Nearer is God than the nose, closer than the jugular vein or eyes. God is the promoter of our good and auspiciousness. He is the bestower of bliss.
He is the giver of happiness and well-being.
God is the light of life. He is the one Life and source of all life.
Approach the one Power and source of power. He is the sole source of supply. He is the supreme supply-officer. He will give you anything you want. All things flow from God and return to God.
Find Him through japa, sincere prayer, devotion and meditation.

HOW TO SEE GOD

That from which this universe has evolved, That in which this universe subsists and That in which this universe dissolves should be understood as Brahman, Atman or God or supreme Being.
That in which there is neither East nor West, neither light nor darkness, should be understood as Brahman.
The highest end of human existence, than gaining which there is no greater gain, than whose bliss there is no greater bliss, than knowing which there is no higher knowledge - that should be understood as Brahman or God or supreme Being.
The personal aspect of that Being is termed 'Ishvara', 'Allah',
'Hari', 'Jehovah', 'Father in Heaven', 'Buddha', 'Siva', etc.
The impersonal aspect is called 'Brahman' by vedantins,
'Unknowable' by Herbert Spencer, "Will' by Schopenhauer,
'Substance' by Spinoza, 'Absolute' and 'Neumenon' by others.

Religion is faith for knowing God and worshipping Him. It is not a matter for discussion at a club table. It is the realisation of the true Self, the fulfilment of the deepest craving in man. Therefore, hold religion as the highest prize of your life. Live every moment of your life for its realisation. Life without religion is real death.

Read the teachings of Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Confucius, Shinto, Chaitanya or Sankara etc. Remove selfishness. Calm the passions. Remove egoism. Purify the heart. Analyse your thoughts, scrutinise your motives, cleanse the dross of impurity. Realise God.

This has been the essence of the preaching of all prophets, seers and sages of all times. This is the essence of sadhana. This is the way to God.

Just as a charioteer restrains the restive horse through the reins, so also will you have to curb the restless senses (the horses) through the reins of discrimination and dispassion. Then alone you will have a safe journey to Atman or God, the sweet eternal abode of peace and bliss.

Be righteous always; never deviate from the path of righteousness. You are born to practice righteousness and lead a virtuous life. Truth is established in righteousness. Stand upright.

Be bold. Be fearless. Practise truth and proclaim it everywhere.

A man who speaks truth, who is merciful and liberal, who has forgiveness and peace, who is free from fear, wrath and greed, who is innocent and loving, is really God or Brahman.

How can you obtain His grace if you have no humility and if you do not make ungrudging, unreserved, unconditioned self-surrender to the Lord? The Lord knows what is good for you better than you do. To resign yourself absolutely to His Will is an even higher form of worship than visiting temples and shaking the bell, and doing all sorts of ritualistic ceremonies. The Lord does not want your external show. He wants your heart. Say once more: "Thy Will be done. I am thine. All is thine," from the bottom of your heart.

Close your eyes. Destroy the desires of body, world and book-lore. Withdraw the mind. Reduce yourself to zero before God.

Merge in Him. Only then will He completely take care of and guide you, only then will surrender become complete. Forget your own interests, your own

longings, your own desires. Sacrifice the lower self if you wish to have union with God.
Empty your egoism. You will be filled with God. Lose your personality. You will realise God.

Yearn For God-Vision

If you remove a fish out of water and place it on the shore, it will flutter with intense agony. It will be thirsting for re-entry into the water. If you keep a boy in the cold water of the Ganges for a short time he will be greatly agitated. He will shriek and yell out. He will be eager to come out of the water. When the house of a man has caught fire, the owner of the house runs immediately to the municipal office to get the fire brigade for extinguishing the fire. He takes immediate steps. If the aspirant has the same thirsting, the same feeling, the same restlessness, the same earnestness or seriousness for realising God as the fish has for getting back into the water, as the boy has for getting out of the water, as the man whose house is on fire has for getting the fire brigade, he will have realisation of God this very second. There is no doubt of this. Oh aspirants, be very serious and earnest in your devotional practices.
Run now to the lotus feet of the Lord. Those people who are not serious and earnest about their devotional practices have lost this world on this end and God on the other end. They are hanging in the air like Trisanku, neither here nor there. Miserable specimens.
Pitiable is their lot.
Do you really want God? Do you really thirst for His darshan?
Have you got spiritual hunger? You may deliver thrilling lectures on bhakti, and you may write several volumes on bhakti, and yet you may not possess a grain of true devotion. He who thirsts for the darshan of God will develop bhakti. God is a question of supply and demand. If you really yearn for His darshan He will reveal Himself to you in an instant.
You need neither art nor science, neither study nor erudition for God-realisation, but faith, purity and devotion. By regular steady sadhana may you attain peace, bliss, knowledge, perfection and God-realisation!

Sit not idly craving God to help thee, but be up and doing, as God helps those who help themselves. From the life of Prahlada learn the method to love God and God alone. Love God as Prahlada did.
Do the best you can and leave the rest to God. This is the highest form of worship. Follow the footsteps of Prahlada. By the grace of the Lord you will attain joy, peace, bliss, perfection and immortality.

Ishvarapranidhana

Ishvara, according to Patanjali Maharishi, is a special purusha untouched by misery, the results of action and desires.
Praising Ishvara, remembering and worshipping Him by words, thoughts and actions and an unswerving devotion unto Him, is called Ishvarapranidhana. This word is translated by some as
'feeling the omnipresence of the Lord'.
Ishvarapranidhana bhakti is an unbroken stream of love towards the feet of the Lord, a love that is the be-all and end-all of a person's existence and during which he is, as it were, absorbed in the object of his devotion.
Madhusudana Sarasvati has also described it as a state of mind, when, previous to its being utterly annihilated and absorbed, it becomes of the nature of the Lord.
Ishvarapranidhana is one of the three angas or limbs of kriya yoga according to Yoga Sutras Chapter II. Here
"Ishvarapranidhana' means surrendering the fruits of work to God.
The root meaning of the word 'pranidhana' is placing of anything under another to the fullest extent. The devotee says: "Whatever I am doing, beautiful or ugly, virtuous or vicious, with desire or without desire, I renounce all that on Thy account; I do all things with submission to Thee." The renunciation of fruit means the doing of an action without thinking of the fruit to be obtained thereby. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says: "Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached." Bhagavad Gita (11-47).

Then again Ishvarapranidhana is one of the five items of niyama according to raja yoga philosophy. Here it means worship of God.

Cut the Three Knots

The Upanishads declare that you will have to break the three knots of ignorance, lust and actions. That is your foremost duty. All other duties are secondary. You have taken this birth to cut these three knots. The wheel of samsara runs on these three. The same thing Patanjali expresses in Raja Yoga Sutras in his classification
— avidya (ignorance), asmita (egoity), raga-dvesha (likes, dislikes) and abhinivesha (clinging to life in this body). You have forgotten your essential nature. In essence you are satchidananda (existence, knowledge, bliss) but you identify yourself with the perishable body.
That is the greatest sin. Lust, anger, greed, infatuation, etc. are all the effects of this wrong identification.
The physical body which is composed of the five elements, the astral body which is composed of seventeen elements, the causal body which consists of original ignorance that brings about birth and death again and again — these three bodies are the effects of ignorance. Out of ignorance comes egoism; you feel "I did this. I am the greatest man. I am a wonderful doctor." These are all modifications of egoism. Then come likes and dislikes. These currents of attraction and repulsion constitute the world in reality - not these hills and rivers, buildings and people. From likes and dislikes comes clinging to this mundane life.
The same thing is explained in vedanta. Ignorance is the first.
Then comes non-discrimination. You may have intellectual capacity and talents, you may possess vast secular knowledge, but you are lacking discrimination. It is a rare divine attribute. With discrimination only can you make enquiry into the nature of the Atman - 'Who am I?' Otherwise you are all merely ignorant. The knowledge that you derive in universities is mere husk. Brahma vidya (knowledge of Brahman) is the highest science of sciences by which the unseen becomes seen, the unheard becomes heard, the unknown

becomes known, the unthought becomes thought of. With this only are you really wise.

The Upanishads speak of the pre-requisites for vedantic nididhyasana (deep meditation). You are unfit for knowledge of Brahman if you have not equipped yourself with viveka (discrimination) vairagya (dispassion), the six-fold virtues and mumukshutva. People complain: "I am practising concentration for the past several years but there is no progress." There is no progress because you are not endowed with these qualities. You are still clinging to this worldly life. That is the reason why you don't have concentration.

Cultivate these qualities from now. Study books written by saints. Study lives of saints daily. Then only will the mind be filled with divine thoughts and aspirations. Now you have only worldly aspirations. Reflect on the nature of the world, sorrow, death, calamities, loss of property. There is a realm, the Atman, where there is neither sorrow nor anxiety, thirst nor hunger. You must know that. Then only will all your desires be gratified. You have no strong conviction of the nature of the Absolute. You must make enquiry. Study the Upanishads.

Then only will the mind be weaned
away from sensual objects.

You must share what you have with others. You must possess all those virtuous qualities which are enumerated in the Bhagavad Gita. Only if you are qualified can you become surgeon-general.

Only if you have the requisite qualifications can you become a superintending engineer. Similarly you must have all these qualifications in the spiritual life. You must practise yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, and then you will be able to concentrate your mind. Samadhi comes only then.

The mind aspires for worldly things only because you have not thought of the nature of the Absolute. You have to melt the mind in silence. When the subtle desires are destroyed the mind becomes one with the Absolute. That is your essential nature. Let me remind you of the last words of the Upanishads: "Tat Toam Asi"' —

"Thou art

That". You have, by God's grace, got this human birth. Discipline the senses and the mind. When the mind is rid of the impurities you will realise that you are one with the Light of lights.
You are the all-pervading Immortal Self. That is your goal.
That realisation is your greatest wealth. Even when you are clad in rags, when you have nothing to eat, when your relations have deserted you, when you are on the role of unemployment and when you are afflicted with disease and have to be carried to your bathroom, assert: "I am the all-pervading Immortal Self",

Right Conduct

No development of divine love or bhakti is possible without right conduct. Just as a disease can be cured by medicine as well as dietetic adjustment, so also realisation of God can be had by devotion and right conduct. Bhakti is the medicine. Right conduct represents dietetic adjustment.
What is right conduct then? To speak the truth; to practise nonviolence (ahimsa); not to hurt the feelings of others in thought, word and deed; not to speak harsh words to anyone; not to show any anger towards anybody; not to abuse others or speak ill of others and to see God in all living beings, is right conduct. If you abuse any one, if you hurt the feelings of others, really you are abusing yourself and hurting the feelings of God only. Himsa (injuring) is a deadly enemy of bhakti and jnana. It separates and divides. It stands in the way of realising unity or oneness of Self.

Root Out Hatred

If you really want to root out hatred and develop pure love you will have to serve that man whom your mind dislikes. Even if inimical feelings arise in your heart you will have to subdue them by frequently raising the opposite, positive feelings of love. This is doubtless a trying, difficult sadhana, but the benefits are wonderful.

You will become a centre of power and energy. You will become a spiritual giant indeed. You will become an embodiment of love.
When you try to control anger, when somebody has injured you, you should not only check the big wave of anger but also try to eradicate the internal burning which remains even though you do not speak harsh words or express outwardly any signs of anger in the face. This is most difficult; but it can be done by continuous service and love.
Whenever a friend is annoyed with you, speak to him first with a smile and apologise sincerely with tears even though you are right.
Serve him nicely with divine love. Vindictive spirit is a deadly enemy of peace, devotion, love and wisdom.
You injure another man on account of ignorance. If you always bear in mind that you see God in every man and animal and that God is seated in the hearts of all living beings, you will not injure anyone. You begin to injure others the moment you forget to see God in others.
Keep a Spiritual Diary*. Note down in the diary when you become angry towards others, when you hurt the feelings of others and so on. This is very important.

Need for a Guru

A guru is necessary. The spiritual path is beset with many obstacles. The guru will guide the aspirants safely and remove all sorts of obstacles and difficulties.
Guru, Ishvara, Brahman, Truth and OM are one. Serve the guru with intense bhakti (guru-seva). Please him in all possible ways. Have the mind fixed on guru as Atman. Obey him implicitly.
His words must be gospel truths for you, then only will you improve, then only will you get His grace. There is no other way.
You will have to deify your guru. You must superimpose all the attributes of Ishvara and Brahman on him. You must take him as an actual God incarnate. You must never look into his defects. You should see only the divinity in him. Then only will you realise Brahman in and through the guru. The physical

form of the guru will slowly vanish. You will realise the all-pervading Atman in and through him. You will see your guru in all forms, animate and inanimate There is no other way for overhauling the vicious worldly samskaras and the passionate nature of raw, worldly-minded persons than the personal contact with and service of the guru. An aspirant who, with great devotion, attends on the guru in his personal service, quickly purifies his heart. This is the easiest and best way for self-purification, I assure you boldly.

It is better if you get your mantra from your guru. This has a tremendous effect on the disciple. The guru imparts his shakti along with the mantra.

Our Sikh brothers sing:

"Wonderful is the guru who removes ignorance and helps you to come face to face with God."

The same idea is expressed in the beautiful Guru Stotras:

"Guru is Brahma. Guru is Vishnu. Guru is Siva. Guru is the supreme Brahman Itself. Prostrations to that guru."

"The form of the guru is the root of meditation. The feet of the guru are the root of worship. The teaching of the guru is the root of all mantras. The grace of the guru is the root of salvation."

There is another wonderful mantra which occurs in the Svetashvatara Upanishad:

"He who has supreme devotion to the Lord and as much devotion to the guru, to him alone the truth of vedanta — the wisdom of the Upanishads - is revealed." Otherwise reading the Upanishads will be novel-reading.

Whoever be your Ishta Devata — Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Allah or Ahura Mazda — you should have supreme devotion to Him, and you should have the same devotion to your guru. Then alone will the truths of the scriptures be revealed to you and you will be able to commune with the Lord. Without this devotion or bhakti nothing can be achieved.

Tread this Glorious Path

Just as fire removes cold, fear and darkness, even so worship of the Lord removes the coldness of sin, fear of rebirth and the darkness of ignorance.

The Lord stops wherever He sees devotion and faith. He worked with Ramdas in tanning hides; He worked on Kabir's loom, He carried clay for Gora, the potter; He paid the bills of Narsi Mehta. How kind and merciful is the Lord! Glory be to the Lord and His devotees. Take refuge in Him alone.

The Lord examines your conscience. He searches your heart.

He is the witness of your thoughts. You cannot hide anything from Him, though you can cheat others and hide your thoughts from them.

As by the watering of a tree at the root all its trunk, branches and twigs get enlivened, and as the senses are gratified by the feeding of the prana with food, so also worship of the Lord gratifies the gods.

The Lord is the sandalwood tree. The saints are like the breeze which carries its aroma and diffuses it all around.

Regard all men as equal, because the Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings. Cruelty to any creature is cruelty done to the Lord, because the Lord lives in all beings.

Teach the eye to behold the form of the Lord. Teach the ear to hear kirtan and the lilas of the Lord. Teach the hands to serve the saints and the poor.

Why is there evil? This is a transcendental question. This is a mystery beyond the intellect. The little, finite, frail reason cannot solve this. Be humble. Do not probe into the divine mysteries. Know God. Realise Him. You will find an answer.

Replace thoughts of your own selfish ends by thoughts for the good of all and thus truly work the Lord's will. Radiate altruistic pure love all around.

O wicked mind, be careful! Why do you indulge in idle talks?

Why do you talk ill of others? Mind your own business. Pray to the Lord sincerely. Give up your wandering habit. Stick tenaciously to the lotus feet of the Lord.

Give thanks to the Lord for all His bounties given to you.

Confess your wickedness. Admit your faults. Ask for forgiveness. Be humble. Pray.

It is not very difficult to have darshan of God. It is not very difficult also to please Him. He is everywhere, within all. He is seated in your hearts. Think of Him always. Pray fervently: "O Lord, have mercy upon me. Open my inner eye. Let me have thy grand vision. Bhaktas sing about Thee as purifier of the fallen

ones, lover of the devotees and merciful towards the helpless. Just as the bird protects the young ones under its wings, so also protect me under thy wings, O Ocean of Mercy!

FAITH

Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: *"Three-fold is by nature the inborn faith of the embodied — pure, passionate, and dark (sattvic, rajasic and tamasic). The faith of each is shaped according to his own nature, Bharata. The man consists of his faith; that which his faith is, he is even that.*

Emerson says: *"A little consideration of what takes place around us every day would show us that a higher law than that of our will regulates events: that our painful labours are very unnecessary and altogether fruitless; that only in our easy, simple, spontaneous action are we strong, and by contenting ourselves with obedience we become divine. Belief and love will relieve us of a vast load of care. O my brothers! God exists. There is a soul at the centre of nature and over the will of every man, so that none of us can wrong the universe. It has so infused its strong enchantment into nature that we prosper when we accept its advice; and when we struggle to wound its creatures our hands are glued to our sides, or they beat our own breasts. The whole course of things goes to teach us faith."*

Faith is a rare flower of inestimable value. It must be cultivated in the garden of your heart. It must be nourished daily with the water of sincerity. The weeds of doubt and misgivings should be totally eradicated. Then it will strike deep root, blossom and bear the fruit of devotion quickly.

Faith indicates what man's character is. Have true, perfect, living, unswerving faith in God, in His grace, in the power of His name. Meditate and open yourself to the divine light. You will be transmuted into divinity.

Faith can move mountains. Faith can work wonders. Faith can take you to the inner chambers of the Lord. Faith can make you divine. Faith can give you peace, inner spiritual strength, joy, freedom, immortality and bliss. Therefore have genuine and living faith in the existence of God, in the scriptures, in the words of your guru and in your own Self.

Faith is the greatest thing in the world. Even the highest rationality has faith as its background. One cannot ratiocinate on things in which he has no faith. Even the greatest philosopher has faith as his stronghold. No intellectualism can prove good if it is not supported by faith. The whole world stands on faith and is guided by faith.

Religion has faith as its root. Religion is not for discussion around the club table, it is faith for knowing and worshipping God.

Religion is practical life in the eternal Atman through earnest, protracted sadhana for years, after withdrawing the turbulent senses and controlling the mind.

One cannot prove God if he has no faith in God. God is only a matter of faith, which is the outcome of previous past impressions.

Certain men are born philosophers and certain others do not grasp the fundamentals of religion even at the age of seventy. This is all due to past impressions. Faith is guided by impressions of actions done in the previous births and the present faith is nearer or farther from the truth in accordance with the advancement made in spiritual evolution.

What is Faith?

Bad company, lust, greed, infatuated love for wife, son and property and unwholesome food are the enemies of faith. They spoil the intellect, cloud the understanding and destroy memory. They produce wrong impressions in the mind and render the intellect gross and impure.

Hear not the voice of the mind. This voice will delude you.

Follow the voice of your soul. This voice will lift you up and take you to the goal. Abandon all sorts of wrong beliefs, weaknesses, superstitions, wrong notions and ideas of impossibilities. Cling fast to the faith in divine possibilities. Have faith in divine life. Aspire fervently and constantly to live in the divine.

Blind faith should be turned into rational faith. Faith without understanding is blind faith. Bhakti is the development of faith. Jnana is the development of bhakti. Faith leads to the ultimate experience. Whatever a person strongly believes in, that he experiences and that he becomes. The whole world is a

product of faithful imagination. If you have no faith in the world, the world does not exist. If you have no faith in sensual objects, they will not give you pleasure. If you have no faith in God, you never reach perfection. Wrong faith turns even existence into non-existence.

" One who thinks that Brahman does not exist, himself becomes non-existent," says the Taittiriyopanishad. Faith is the fundamental necessity for spiritual sadhana.

Aspiration is a development of faith. It is one step ahead of faith. The flame of faith burns as the conflagration of spiritual aspiration for moksha (liberation). The aspirant yearns to have divine experience. It is no more mere faith but strong feeling which cannot be easily shaken by external events. The devotee longs to have union with the Beloved. He has no sleep, no rest. He always contemplates on how to attain the object of his love. He prays, sings, and gets mad with love of his Lord. Divine madness overtakes the devotee and he completely loses his personality in the aspiration for attaining God. This is called self-surrender.

Faith can be strengthened by satsang (contact with sages and devotees), prayer, self-purification,
meditation and
study of
scriptures. You can ascend the rungs of the spiritual ladder with the help of intense unflinching faith alone. Whenever doubts assail you, reject them ruthlessly. Open your heart to the divine light, the source for all knowledge, all light. Become as simple as a child. Pray from the bottom of your heart. The flame will again become brighter and brighter.

Faith can work miracles, faith can work wonders, faith can move mountains, faith can reach a realm where reason dare not enter. There is nothing impossible under the sun for the man of faith to accomplish. Therefore have absolute and unshakable faith in God, in the power of Ram nam, in the Vedas and the scriptures and in the teachings of your guru, and last but not least in your own self.

This is the master-key for success in life and god-realisiton, or attainment of divine consciousness.

Need for Faith

Faith is an important qualification for an aspirant in the path of Faith spirituality. Students of all yogas, whether of karma, bhakti, raja or jnana, should possess this fundamental virtue. No faith, no devotion. No faith, no jnana.

The whole world runs on faith only - the rajah has faith in his dewan, the husband has faith in his wife, the shopkeeper has faith in his customers, the patient has faith in his doctor, the client has faith in his lawyer and the engineer has faith in his head-clerk.

Faith is one of the important items in the sixfold virtues of viveka (discrimination), vairagya (dispassion), sama (tranquillity), dama (sense control), sraddha (faith) and uparathi (renunciation) from the four means of salvation (or sadhana chatushtaya) in the path of jnana. Just as coloured water penetrates freely and nicely a piece of pure white cloth, so also the instructions of a sage can penetrate and settle down in the hearts of aspirants only when their minds are calm, when there are no desires for enjoyments and when the impurities of their minds are destroyed. That is the reason why an aspirant is expected to possess these qualifications before he practises hearing of scriptures, reflection and meditation. Discipline and purification of the mind and the senses are the pre-requisites of an aspirant in the path of truth and God-realisation.

Even Patanjali Maharshi, the exponent of raja yoga philosophy, lays much stress on faith. He says: *"To others (this samadhi) comes through faith, energy, memory, concentration and discrimination of the real."* (1-20). He has placed faith in the very beginning of this sutra. He has given prominence to this. If a man has faith, then energy, memory etc. come by themselves. He will collect all his energies and will exert to realise the basic Reality.

Let me repeat the words of the Bhagavad Gita here: *"He who is full of faith obtains wisdom, and he also who has mastery over his senses; and having obtained wisdom he goes swiftly to the supreme peace. But the ignorant, faithless, doubting self goes to destruction; neither this world, nor that beyond, not happiness is there for the doubting self."* (IV-39,40)

Faith in God is the first step to God-realisation. Not an iota of progress is ever possible in the path of spirituality without faith. You cannot achieve anything

grand, sublime and meritorious with a weak and wavering faith. You cannot reach the goal of life with a faith that flickers at every step. You cannot ascend the summit of nirvikalpa samadhi or mahabhav samadhi with an impotent and passive faith. Your faith must be as firm as the Himalayas or the Sumeru mountains. It must be as steady as the lamp that burns steadily in a windless place. The faith must be a living faith. It must be unwavering. Faith develops into bhakti or devotion to God. It is the gateway to the kingdom of God. It is the threshold to the knowledge of God. It gives strength and removes anxieties and uneasiness of mind, and is therefore a powerful mental tonic.
Srutis emphatically declare, "Know Him by faith, devotion and meditation." Again faith comes first. Without faith you cannot practise either concentration or meditation. Self-realisation is a transcendental experience. You can march in the spiritual path only by placing implicit faith in the words of sages who have realised the Truth and have attained knowledge of the Self.

Lack of Faith

To the faithless the express significance of the Vedas and the maha vakyas (or Upanishadic declarations, four in number: viz.
Consciousness is Brahman', 'I am Brahman', 'That Thou Art' and
'This Self is Brahman') is like a thing sunk in mire. It is like the howling of a dog with its eyes cast up on the heavens.
Maya havocs through doubt. Doubt seriously torments and disturbs the peace of mind. The doubt regarding the proof can be removed by hearing of the scripture from the teacher. The doubt regarding Brahman or the object of proof can be removed by reflection on what you have heard. Wrong conceptions can be removed by constant nididhyasana (meditation on the immortal Atman).
Have faith in god and proper understanding of the scriptures. If ignorant people with impure hearts and perverted intellects read the Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, or Bhagavatam they will only try to find out mistakes through fault-finding. They begin to discuss useless points, viz: "Why did Rama kill a sudra who was practising tapas in a forest? Is this justifiable? Why did Krishna do this and that? Why did the avatara commit such mistakes?" Such people

will not be benefited by the study of sacred scriptures. Their minds are like the sieve. They will leave out the essence that has to be grasped and misconstrue things in a wrong light. Only those who have purified their minds will be able to understand the real significance of the teachings of the scriptures.

Lord Rama killed the sudra. The sudra deserved such a capital punishment because he murdered the son of a brahmin. Rama acted thus to maintain law, order and righteousness. Can you find any fault with the Ruler of this universe who is omniscient, who is the dispenser of fruits of actions according to the nature of Karmas of jivas? Some orthodox and narrow-minded persons twist the truth and play mischief. It is priestcraft and religious cheating

Lord Rama is the supreme Soul, the inner Ruler, the protector of all beings. He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. He is Lord Hari. He was never born; He never died. Lord Hari simply manifested in the form of Rama for the solidarity of the world, and then vanished. He had a body of absolute consciousness, though to all appearances it appeared like flesh. Remember this, understand this point clearly.

It is simply foolishness to bring Lord Rama (or Lord Krishna) to the level of an ordinary human being and to speak of whether His acts are justified or not. Lord Hari manifested in the form of Lord Krishna and Rama for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness. Lord Krishna says:

"The foolish disregard me when clad in human semblance, ignorant of My supreme nature, the Great Lord of all beings." (IX-11)

Even when God is explained, those who have not been purged of their faults and impurities either disbelieve or misbelieve it, as was the case with Indra, Virochana, etc. Therefore knowledge as inculcated arises in him who has by austerities, etc., performed either in this birth or in many previous births, purified himself. The scriptures say: " To that high-souled man whose devotion to the Lord is great, and whose devotion to his preceptor is as great as that to the Lord, these secrets explained become illumined." (Svetashvatara Upanishad VI-23).

There are some idle people who for the sake of curiosity indulge in such talks just to while away the time in unnecessary discussion and debates and to

show themselves that they are also learned and religious-minded. This sort of people do not do any kind of sadhana.
They have no vairagya (discrimination) and waste their time in idle gossiping. They lack proper understanding of the scriptures and faith in God and His lilas. There is no practical vedanta these days, there is only vedantic gossiping. It is blasphemy to say that Lord Rama did a wrong act. A real aspirant will never indulge in such frivolous talks.
Time is fleeting. Every moment must be well utilised in His worship and service. There is no use arguing. You must do something practical and cross this ocean of delusion in this very birth. Religion is realisation. We must live an ideal spiritual life every second. Whenever friends indulge in such topics, when you hear lectures or discourses that disturb your faith, that make your faith flicker, turn a deaf ear, keep silence or leave the place immediately. Do not keep company with such people till you grow, till you get established in the rock of divine love. Never budge an inch from your present position. Stand adamant in the bedrock of faith. You will enjoy peace. You will save much time for your spiritual sadhana.
Study Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Bhagavatam and other scriptures and have proper understanding. Do not be carried away by the turbulent senses, the influences of your useless friends and idle discussions. By devotion and faith know Him in essence and through His grace attain supreme bliss, supreme peace and supreme knowledge! May God bless you!

The Power of Faith

Look at the perfect faith of the boy Nam Dev! His father asked him to place a dish of food to Vittobha (Lord Krishna at Pandaripur). Nam Dev placed the plate before the murthi (image) and asked the Deity to eat it. He wept bitterly when the murthi kept quiet. After some time Lord Krishna came out of the murthi in the form of a boy and ate the food. The boy brought back the plate empty. The father asked: "Nam Dev where is the food?" The boy replied: "My Vittobha has eaten it." Such is the power of real faith.
Kannappa, the hunter of Kalahasthi, had true living faith in Lord Siva. He daily gave flesh of wild beasts as an offering to the Lord. Siva tested the sincerity of

Kannappa one day. Tears fell down His right eye (in the Siva-linga). Kannappa was sorely moved. He plucked out his right eye and fixed it in the Siva-linga. The next day there were tears in the Siva-linga's left eye. Kannappa plucked his left eye and fixed it in the linga. At once Lord Siva appeared before Kannappa and blessed him. Kannappa had new eyes immediately and attained the kingdom of Lord Siva — Kailasa, the abode of immortality and eternal bliss. You should possess the same unshakable living faith which Kannappa had. Then only can you enjoy the everlasting peace of the eternal.

Dhruva had faith in the words of his mother, so he retired into the forest, did severe tapas (austerity) and came face to face with Lord Hari. The milk-maid had faith in the words of the pundit who said: "Thousands have easily crossed the ocean by a single name of God. Could you not cross this tiny stream?" and crossed the river by reciting His name, whereas the faithless pundit who preached about the power of the name to the milk-maid was on the point of drowning when he himself tried to cross the river on the strength of the name, after seeing the marvellous spectacle of the girl's crossing the river by repeating Ram nam.

Prahlada was persecuted by his father in a variety of ways. He was rolled down from the summit of a mountain, trampled under the feet of an elephant, thrown into the sea and put in a big vessel containing boiling oil; cobras were thrown at him and poison was administered to him by his own mother, yet he did not lose his faith in Lord Narayana. He was clinging to Him tenaciously like a leech.

His faith was unflinching and unshakable.

Such must be the faith of aspirants of the Lord. You will be tested by the Lord in various ways. Even under extreme trials and difficulties you should not lose your faith. Faith is your sheet anchor.

It was the unswerving faith that has made the two boy-devotees, Prahlada and Dhruva, immortal. Their achievement was the work of that simple secret called 'faith'. All obstacles and difficulties, however great and powerful they may be, will vanish entirely before sincere and living faith.

The rare achievements of Visvamitra Rishi in his tapas and yoga, the success of Napoleon in the field of battle, the attainments of Mahatma Gandhi in his karma yoga and practice of yama, the awe-inspiring majesty and the soul-

stirring magnanimity and grandeur and nobility of great personages like Tulsidas, Ramdas, Sri Dattatreya, Sri Sankara, Vamadev and Jada Bharata are all due to faith.

PRAYER

As children we pray to our parents, elders and guardians at the time of our need: we seek their help, their guidance. When we grow into adolescence we learn to pray to ourselves - to our latent abilities and strength; we try to be self-supported without being dependent on others' aid. But there is a limitation to this prayer.

When we feel that we are in need of something else which is beyond our capacity, which is not always humanly possible, we resign ourselves to God, and pray for His help, for His guidance. Evidently we feel His response; an all-potent inner Force that listens to our prayers and fulfils our wish the moment we are a little sincere and faithful.

The devotee resigns himself to God, surrendering his ego at His feet; he forgets all about the world and thinks of nothing else but God alone who would surely save him, and who alone is able to help and guide him. He aligns his will with God's and acts as per His guidance. There is no sense of individuality or doership in him: he knows God's will is his will, and he must act up to it. Does that mean that he is shorn of self effort? Certainly not. For, he negates himself and resigns himself to the Lord. To him divine grace flows instantly.

His nature is divinized and so he naturally exerts himself in the right direction. Indeed, the very act of self-surrender is self effort of the highest order.

A vedantin's prayer is essentially the prayer to the Self within - to himself — to the Cosmic Consciousness that is immanent in all. In the initial stage he considers his prayer as a sort of desire - either earthly or spiritual, either with motive or without motive. Then when he sufficiently advances in his sadhana he considers his (so-called) desire as God's will which finally opens his intuitive spiritual sight and becomes one with the Cosmic will.

According to Ghazali, the Muslim mystic, prayer has three stages: verbal, mental and when merging with the Lord's will. At the first stage the devotee sings the glory of God, chants His praise and pours out his anguish of heart in melodious hymns. Secondly, when the mind becomes calm, when the outgoing senses have been restrained by sustained practices, when the mind cannot be easily affected by evil influences, prayer becomes mental. There no physical effort is needed. At the third stage, when the mind gets concentrated in the Divine and loses its outward attractions and becomes serene and devoid of desires or cravings,
the prayer
becomes automatic, natural and habitual. It reaches its highest stage. The Lord's will becomes his own will. For, God who is invoked by his prayer, merges in his mind - in his will; there is no self-consciousness for him, he abides in the Lord, his mind being entirely saturated with Him. He perceives nothing external, nor anything internal; he even forgets that he is praying to the Lord, that he is absorbed in the Lord's will. He has only one experience - his oneness with the Lord.
Prayer is full of emotions: deep, serene emotions, coupled with sincerity. But when it is more of an emotional nature than of actual sincerity, it becomes rather spiritless and therefore ineffective. It is here we do not receive direct response from God.
Prayer has its consequences - the nature of its response mainly depending upon the inner nature of the person who prays, his temperament and his object in view, his requirements and his faith and sincerity.
Sometimes our main object of prayer becomes selfish, grossly earthy, unreasonable and irrational. We crave for our selfish ends, for the fulfilment of our material desires. At times we even venture to pray for an evil wish. It is here we experience its negative consequence. Essentially, prayer should be selfless as far as possible.
We should first pray for the good of others, for the welfare and peace of the world and for our own spiritual evolution; we should pray for the eradication of our evil qualities, for wisdom and knowledge, for goodness and saintliness.

asato ma sat gamaya

tamaso ma jyotirgamaya
mrityor ma amritam gamaya

" Lead me on from unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from mortality to Immortality."

This is the best prayer; the prayer for the Light, for the Truth, for Immortality. The foremost prayer of an aspirant should be for the removal of his ignorance. His goal is to realize the Truth and to free himself from the meshes of that which is unreal. His goal is to realize his essential divine nature.
At times even sincere prayer is not responded to. This, however, should never be allowed to mar our faith or sincerity or to discourage and depress us; but should be considered as a necessity, to test our sincerity, our serenity and faith in God.
Often God tests us with severest trials. But does it mean that He is unkind? That He does not wish to pay heed to our prayers?
Obviously not. It is only a test, which the aspirant must pass through. His faith may not be strong enough; his heart and mind might not have become pure yet.
How can the aspirant strengthen his faith? How can he cleanse the dross of this mind and purify his heart? It is only through tests, trials and tribulations. Just as the gold is purified by passing it through the crucible several times, so also the heart must become pure and the faith unflinching by passing through the crucible of trials again and again. But at the ultimate end all prayers are fulfilled and gratified with the highest fulfilment. Therefore when we pray to God or wish to receive grace from Him we must be prepared to accept joyfully his irresponse and even trials and tribulations.
Prayer cleanses the dross and steadies the mind. It washes off the impurities of the heart with pure waters of spiritual emotions, corrects the defects and shortcomings and prepares the mind for the reception of self-knowledge. In times of danger and calamity, mass prayer works wonders. Prayer for the departed souls bestows peace on them.
Prayer is as real as the force of gravity. It can reach a realm where reason is too feeble to enter. It can work miracles. Its magnanimous efficacy is

indescribable. Its potency can hardly be comprehended without actual experience.
Prayer, worship and mantras possess real power. The believer gains through his faith. The unbeliever does not obtain this gain.
Sincere prayer to the Lord will draw His grace and bestow supreme blessedness upon you.
Prayer is a form of communication of an individual with the Divine. It is an address, call, invitation, appeal or entreaty to the Lord. It is the uplifting of the spirit of man to the highest spiritual level. It is the calling for aid from God. Through prayer you tune yourself with the Lord and invoke His blessings. The Lord grants peace, strength and wisdom.
Prayer is an artless opening of the chamber of your heart for the descent of divine light. There is a vital union between faith and prayer. The power of faith is irresistable. It will not go in vain. Faith is a great thing. It decides the extent to which revelation and illumination be given to man. Each one receives in accordance with the degree of his faith. Believe. Be firm in thy faith.

Devotee's Prayer

O adorable Lord, I care not for wealth, position and enjoyment here. Let me be endowed with unshaken love for Thy Lotus Feet. O Lord! Thou art the light of the world. Keep the Light within me always burning.
O adorable Lord, come to me; O all-merciful Lord, dwell in me; O omnipotent Lord, manifest Thyself in me.
O Lord! Protect us from troubles and sufferings; vain is the help of frail man who is himself weak and bound.
Salutations be unto you O Lord Hari, O Best One. Be propitious. Save us from error. Protect us from all fears.
Come, O Lord Siva, O Thou before whom all devas bow! I bow to Thee, the Lord of all, O great Deva.
O Adorable Lord of compassion and Love! I will be very busy during Sadhana Week. I may forget thee; but do not Thou forget me.

Salutations to Thee, manifesting Thyself in three forms - first as Creator, thereafter as the Protector and then as the Destroyer of the World.
Children afflicted by hunger and thirst ever remember their mother. I remember Thee, O Lord, when I am overwhelmed by danger.
O Lord! Salutations unto Thee. This is the proper time for making gifts. Thou art a great Giver and none else but Thee shall I approach for begging. Grant me unflinching devotion unto Thee, grant me light and wisdom.

Power of Prayer

Prayer has tremendous influence. I have many experiences.
Gandhiji is a great votary of prayer. If the prayer is sincere and if it proceeds from the bottom of your heart it will at once melt the heart of the Lord. Lord Krishna had to run barefooted from Dvaraka on hearing the heartfelt prayer of Draupadi. Lord Hari, the mighty Ruler of this universe, apologised before Prahlada for coming to his rescue a little late. How merciful and loving is God! Prayer can move mountains. Prayer can work miracles. Say even once from the bottom of your heart: "O Lord, I am thine. Thy will be done. Have mercy on me. I am Thy servant. Forgive. Guide.
Protect. Enlighten." Have a meek receptive attitude of mind. Have the right inner attitude. The prayer is at once heard and responded to. Do this in the daily battle of life and realise for yourself the high efficacy of prayer. You must have strong conviction in the existence of God.
Christians have different prayers for getting various gifts and bounties from God. Mohammedans and all religionists have daily prayers at sunrise, noon, sunset, just before retiring to bed and just before taking food. Prayer is the beginning of yoga. Prayer is the first important limb of yoga. Preliminary spiritual sadhana (or practice) is prayer.
Even when the dacoit (thief) prays, God helps him. Pray to God for purity, devotion, light and knowledge. You will get these things.
Get up in the early morning and repeat some prayer for getting mental and physical celibacy. Pray in any way you like. Become as simple as a child. Open freely the chambers of your heart. Have no cunningness or crookedness. You will get everything. Sincere bhaktas know about the high efficacy of prayers.

Narada Muni is still praying. Nam Dev prayed and Vittobha came out of the image to eat his offerings. Ekanath prayed; Lord Hari showed his form with four hands. Mira prayed; Lord Krishna served her as a servant. Damaj prayed; Lord Krishna played the part of a menial in paying his dues to the Badshah. What more do you want? Pray fervently right now from this very second. Do not delay, friend. That 'tomorrow' will never come.

SURRENDER

Self-Surrender and Grace

Self-surrender is complete surrendering of the self to God. Self-surrender makes the devotee feel the reality of divine grace and the Lord's readiness to bestow help on him at all times. The divine influence streams into his being and moulds it to make it a fit medium for divine realisation and divine instrumentality.

Self-surrender is only another name for the effacement of the ego. The essential characteristics of devotion are the consecration of all activities by total self-surrender to the Lord and extreme anguish if the Lord were to be forgotten.

Through self-surrender the devotee becomes one with the personal God or saguna Brahman, just as through self-denial the vedantic student or aspirant in the path of jnana yoga becomes one with the impersonal Absolute.

The greater the capacity of surrender to God, the greater will be your joy. Surrender your ego at the lotus feet of the Lord and seek satisfaction only in doing His will. If you think and speak of your own ability, the grace of the Lord will not come to you. The grace descends on a very humble soul who always says, "God does everything. I am an instrument in His hands"

There is no loss in self-surrender. You get everything from the Lord. You enjoy all divine powers of the Lord. The whole wealth of the Lord belongs to you. Supernatural and psychic powers will roll under your feet. You become one with the Lord. You are freed from all wants and desires and cravings. The spiritually hungry and thirsty aspirant who yearns for the vision of the Lord

turns towards the divine and is quite willing, eager and happy to consecrate his body, life, mind and soul at the feet of the Lord.

Divine will is an eternal unalterable law. Surrender your will at the feet of the Lord. You will know the divine will. The self-surrender must be total, ungrudging and unreserved. You must not keep certain desires for gratification. Mira says: "I have given my whole heart, mind, intellect, soul, my all to my Giridhar Gopal (Krishna)." This is perfect self-surrender. Mira obtained Lord Krishna's grace and became one with Him.

If you do total, unreserved self-surrender to the Lord every moment of your life, every little action and every movement of the mind will become consecrated to God. You will live for Him and Him alone. When the surrender is complete God takes complete charge of the devotee and looks after his welfare. He reveals to him His play in the world.

Give up your own obstinate ways. Accept the way of the divine.

Annihilate the self-assertive rajasic ego by increasing sattva and developing humility.

Do not bother about taking care of your body. God will save it if He needs it for further service. Surrender it at His feet and rest in peace. He will take care of it. A real devotee says, "Let me take millions of births. It does not matter. But let me be attached to the lotus-feet of the Lord. Let me have spontaneous devotion to the Lord. Let me be endowed with purity, spiritual strength, spirit of selfless service and divine virtues."

Self-surrender does not mean retirement into the forests. It does not mean giving up of all activities. Tamas or inertia is mistaken for self-surrender. This is a sad mistake. What is wanted is internal surrender. The ego and desire must be annihilated. This will constitute real surrender.

God helps those who help themselves. The best possible effort that one is capable of exercising under the intellectual circumstances provided by God should be put forth, and only beyond this effort should one seek the grace of God. Idleness is not self-surrender.

Surrender of self to God becomes complete only when the individual consciousness is flooded over by love for the Divine. God's grace descends when the efforts exercised are found to be inadequate in the realisation of God.

If you simply say without real inner leeling, "I am thine, O Lord," this will not constitute real integral self-surrender. It should come from the core of your heart. You must be prepared for a radical change. You should not stick to your old habits, ways and motives.

You should not expect that everything should happen in the way you want. You should live to carry out the divine purpose. You should not think of those ambitions which the mind likes to gratify nor think of using even the divine grace or the divine force for your own purpose. The irrepressible ego will assert in various ways and refuse to give up its old habits and ways. It will try to get everything from the Divine. It will totally decline to give itself to the Divine. The devotee even expects God to do the self-surrender for him! This is mere foolishness only. He will have to do the self-surrender himself. Remember this point well.

Obstinacy is a great obstacle to surrender. The lower nature again and again raises up to assert itself. There is resurrection of desires. Desires get suppressed for some time. Again they manifest with redoubled force. Man is dragged hither and thither by these desires. That is the reason why aspirants do not make any substantial progress in the spiritual path even after doing sadhana for several years.

Take refuge in the Lord. Take refuge in the names of the Lord.

Take refuge in His grace. Take refuge at His lotus feet, the boat which helps you to cross this terrible ocean of samsara.

God is the lover and the beloved at the same time. He loves the devotee and is the beloved of the latter. God's love is equally spread over all. It is only those who love God who are aware of the love of God. God is not partial to anyone, but those who pray to Him feel His grace. It is the sincere prayer of the devotee that brings about the materialisation of the grace of God.

Repeat, "I am Thine. All is Thine. Thy will be done." Throw all your burdens on Him and be at ease. Do not keep any desires for yourself. Destroy egoism completely by unconditioned, unreserved and ungrudging self-surrender to the Lord. If your surrender is total and sincere there will be a free flow of divine grace.

Surrender and grace are inter-related. Surrender draws down grace and grace makes surrender complete. Surrender starts the purification of the heart. Grace completes it.
Without grace the complete unification is not possible. Grace divinizes your being in order that the constant inflow and inspiration can be received and retained. It is through divine grace alone that your whole being is galvanized and rejunevated.
Believe in the divine possibilities. Completely dedicate yourself to the Lord. Have full trust in Him. Rest in peace. All cares, worries, anxieties, tribulations and egoistic efforts will terminate.
Imperfection, defects and weakness even of a serious kind are no bar to spiritual progress. They can be removed through the grace of the Lord.

How to Surrender

If there is delay in the descent of divine light and grace, do not despair. Do not give up the struggle. It is very difficult to say when, how and on whom the divine grace will descend.
Surrender is not a thing that is done in a week or a month. You cannot make total surrender from the very beginning of your sadhana. The first stage of self-surrender is only a firm resolve to surrender oneself to God or the preceptor. In the beginning the individual effort is very necessary.
The lower nature must be thoroughly overhauled. All old wrong habits must be completely destroyed. Do not make plans and speculations. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'
Keep the mind and the intellect passive. Become silent. Feel His grace and love and enjoy the divine ecstasy. Be at ease. Trust the divine grace at every step. Speak to the Lord like a child. Be candid.
Open your heart freely to Him.
Pray to God sincerely, "O Lord! Make my will strong to resist all temptations, to control my sense organs and lower nature, to change my old evil habits and to make my surrender complete and real. Enthrone Thyself in my heart. Do not leave this place even for a second. Use my body, mind and organs as instruments. Make me fit to dwell in Thee for ever."

Reduce yourself to zero before God. Only then will God completely take care of and guide you.

Renunciation of the family life is the beginning of self-surrender. He who is endowed with burning dispassion and discrimination and is really earnest for his spiritual rejuvenation can also do complete self-surrender even though he is in the world. In and through the world he realizes the Lord by complete surrender of his entire being to Him. It is only very fenumerable obst of doing this, because the worldly life is beset with innumerable obstacles and temptations and the aspirant finds it very difficult to attain complete dispassion in the midst of so many dissipations and distractions.

Therefore, renunciation of family life makes his path easier and smoother. The seed is now sown. Then the aspirant goes to his preceptor and falls at his feet. Now the seed germinates. He starts the service of his guru. As he advances in his devotion and sincere service his surrender becomes more and more perfect and complete.

His heart becomes purer and purer.

When surrender has been complete, gradually the light of knowledge dawns in him and he cognizes the supreme Atman which pervades all and everywhere, the divine grace dawns in him and the divine power itself does the sadhana for him. The descent of divine grace and power takes complete possession of his mind, will, life and body. Then the sadhana goes on with tremendous speed.

The actions performed by the seeker after renunciation do not bind him, as he offers all his actions as offerings unto his preceptor or the Lord. He does not do any action which can be considered as selfish. Thus through service of one's preceptor with utter self-dedication his heart becomes purified, and ultimately the Lord becomes his preceptor. Now he is completely surrendered to the Lord and he attains the highest intuition.

Self-surrender becomes perfect only after God-realisation.

Secret of Surrender

Throughout the Bhagavad Gita there is a ringing note that surrender and devotion are absolutely necessary for the attainment of God-consciousness.

The following Gita verses will impress on your mind the importance of devotion and self-surrender:

" Flee unto Him for shelter with all thy being, O Bharata; by His grace thou shalt obtain supreme peace, the everlasting dwelling place." (XVIII-62).

"Merge thy mind in Me, be My devotee, sacrifice to Me, prostrate thyself before Me. Thou shalt come to Me." (XVIII-65).

"Abandoning all duties come unto Me alone for shelter; sorrow not, I will Liberate thee from all sins. " (XVIII-66).

Verses 65 and 66 of Chapter XVIII are the most important verses of the Bhagavad Gita. The gist of the teachings of Lord Krishna is here. If anyone can live in the true spirit of these verses he will realise the goal of life soon. There is no doubt of this.

Verse 66 is a powerful mantra that will help the devotee in effecting his self-surrender if he keeps the feeling of it constantly before his mind. It corresponds to the mantra: 'I surrender myself to Sri Rama' of bhaktas of Sri Rama; and 'I surrender myself to Lord Krishna' of bhaktas of Lord Hari. Those who repeat the above mantras with feeling will get the grace of the Lord soon. They will be able to accomplish perfect self-surrender.

Repetition of the following formulae also will help you to make perfect self-surrender: "I am Thine, my Lord, all are Thine.

Thy will be done." Even if you say once from the core of your heart, from the central, inner being, with one-pointed devotion, with 100 per cent of your mind, "I am Thine, my Lord," the gulf that separates you from God will be bridged over at once. The mind, subconscious mind, heart, intellect and soul should all combine harmoniously in effecting the surrender. Then only the self-surrender will be true, complete and perfect.

In reality, the nine modes of devotion are reducible to one, self-surrender. The bhakta starts with hearing the stories and attributes of the Lord and slowly ascends the different rungs in the ladder of bhakti yoga to ultimately reach the highest rung, self-surrender. The will of the devotee becomes one with the Cosmic Will. The devotee becomes one with the Lord. He feels and sees the Lord as Rama in every hair follicle of his body, in every atom and molecule. This state is unthinkable and indescribable. As his egoism is totally destroyed, Lord Rama directly speaks and works through his different organs.

Egoism

The obstacles that stand in the way of self-surrender are desires and egoism. The self-arrogating little ego persists and resists again and again. It clings leech-like to its old habits, cravings and desires.

It wages guerilla war. It resists surrender. It demands certain objects for its secret gratification and keeps subtle desires for its own silent appeasement. Introspect and find out the subtle desires that lurk in the corners of your heart through the search-light of concentration and discrimination, and kill them ruthlessly through regular, silent meditation.

The ego is vulgar and obstinate. It is very difficult to melt it. Constant vigilance and ceaseless effort is necessary to slay this dire enemy of peace and wisdom. If the mind says, "I am Thine my Lord,"; if the buddhi says, "I am Mr. So-and-so, I am a M.L.C. I know everything, I am a powerful judge,
"; if the subconscious says,
"I must have the psychic power to get whatever I want," and if the soul says "I am a great devotee," you are only a hypocrite. You have not made any kind of self-surrender. Beware of moral and spiritual pride. Maya assumes various subtle forms. Moral and spiritual pride of aspirants are more dangerous than the ordinary pride of wealth, power and position of worldly-minded persons. Egoism is the reason why one is not able to make perfect self-surrender and have darshan (vision) of his Ishtam (tutelary deity).

Egoism is like hard granite. It has to be split asunder through constant hammering with the chisel of bhakti. Even the very hard diamond is pierced through by another material and a slender wire is passed through the hole in the diamond when a necklace is made.

Even so this hard heart must be pierced through by self-surrender and the slender thread of bhakti must be passed through the hole in the heart.

The self-surrender must be totally unreserved, ungrudging and unconditioned. The whole being should be surrendered. Lord Krishna says, "Flee unto Him for shelter with all thy being, O Bharata."

The subconscious, the ego, the mind, the intellect and the soul should be placed at the feet of the Lord. Then only will He take a seat in the heart of His devotee.

The Real Devotee

A real devotee never complains against God. A raw bhakta speaks ill of God when he is in distress. He says: "I have done 25 lakhs of japa, I am studying Bhagavatam daily, yet God is not pleased with me. He has not removed my sufferings. God is blind.
He has not heard my prayers. What sort of God is Lord Krishna? I have no faith in Him.'
A real bhakta rejoices in suffering, pain and destitution. He welcomes grief and sorrow always, so that he may not forget God even for a second. He has the firm belief that God does everything for his good only. Kunti Devi prayed to Krishna: "O Lord! Give me pain always. Then only will I remember Thee always.'
A real devotee will not ask the Lord even for liberation. So long as the subtle desire for liberation lingers in one's heart he cannot claim to be a true devotee of the Lord. Though the desire for liberation is of sattvic nature, yet the devotee has become a slave of the desire for liberation. He is still selfish and so is unfit to call himself a sincere lover of God. He has not yet made total unreserved self-surrender. To ask for liberation is a variety of hypocrisy. Can a true devotee dare ask anything from God, when he fully knows that He is an ocean of love and compassion?
In Puri a saint who completely dedicated himself to Lord Hari was seriously ailing from chronic dysentery. He became quite helpless. Lord Hari of Puri was serving him for months in the form of a servant. The law of Karma is inexorable. Nobody can escape from the operation of this infallible law. The Lord did not want the bhakta to take another birth for the exhaustion of his Karma, so His devotee had to suffer from protracted ailment. This was his karmic purgation. But the Lord Himself served him, as the devotee surrendered himself completely. Look at the unbounded mercy of the Lord. He becomes a slave of His devotees when they entirely depend upon Him.

The Doctrine of Grace

You can notice the Lord's grace in every inch of His creation.

In a hot summer you enjoy the delicious sweet grapes, cucumber, oranges and pomegranate and cool Ganges water of Rishikesh and Haridwar. This is the Lord's grace. When you suffer from any serious ailment you get immediate relief and cure from herbs. This is the Lord's grace. When you walk in a dark night the stars twinkle and throw light on your path. This is the Lord's grace. When you are unable to bear extreme pain you become unconscious. This is the Lord's grace. When the weather is sultry, a gentle breeze blows and refreshes you. This is the Lord's grace.

The Lord's grace will descend in proportion to the degree of surrender. The more the surrender, the more the grace.

Kathopanishad says in a thundering voice: "Not by study or discourses, not by argument, not by intelligence is the Self attained. He whom the Lord chooses attains Self-realisation. He reveals Himself to such a chosen person."

The subtle forms of lust, anger, egoism and pride, etc. can only be totally destroyed through the grace of the Lord. However hard you may strive and do sadhana, these subtle forms cannot be eradicated through your sadhana alone. The Lord's grace completely purifies your heart.

You should not sit idle and say, "The Lord's grace will do everything for me. Why should I do any sadhana?" This is wrong philosophy. God helps those who help themselves. God's grace will descend only on those persons who exert. You cannot expect the Lord to do self-surrender for you. Be up and doing. Strive. Plod.

Persevere. The Lord will shower His grace upon you. It is the Lord only who stirs the aspirants to right exertion.

Mira abandoned everything; she renounced her kingdom, her husband, relatives, friends and property. She remembered her Lord Krishna the whole day and night. She shed tears of divine love and sang His praises with single-minded devotion. She gave up food and her body got emaciated. Her mind was ever absorbed in Lord Krishna. Only then did Lord Krishna shower His grace upon her.

So that people will not become idle and say, "The Lord will do everything for me. Why should I do any sadhana? I depend upon His grace alone," Sri Vasistha and others have preached self-effort; but in reality it is all the Lord's grace only. Not even a leaf or an atom will move without the sanction of the Lord.
May you all obtain His grace through faith and devotion. May the Lord shower His grace upon you all.

PRACTICE OF BHAKTI YOGA

How to Develop Bhakti

Bhakti can be acquired and cultivated. Practice of the nine modes will infuse real bhakti. Constant satsang, japa, prayer, meditation, study of scriptures, chanting, service of saints, charity, etc., will develop bhakti.
A bath in the Ganges removes sin when done with faith. The moon cools the body and mind. Satsang and darshan of mahatmas give peace. A mahatma is a living place of pilgrimage. The rivers Ganges, Jumuna, Sarasvati, Godavari, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri flow at his sacred feet. If you feed one jivanmukta (one who is liberated) even once, you have fed the whole world. Guru, Siva, Ishvara, Brahman and Truth are one. Worship of the guru in the physical form is the worship of Ishvara or Brahman.
Develop intense faith. Give up your arrogance and impertinence. Sit at the feet of your guru, inspired with bhakti. He will transmit spirituality to you. His grace will be on the seekers who have done self effort. When once you have taken someone as your guru you should never change, even if you later find a man with greater developments and siddhis (psychic powers).
Believe in God and do right. Have firm faith and remember that He is within you every moment, watching your movements.
Have a keen desire for liberation.
Even a day well spent in righteous actions, in japa, meditation, prayer, satsang, kirtan, concentration on Atman, recognition of the divine presence and divine

glory, and thinking of God, is better than a life of a hundred years spent in idle talk, gambling, playing cards, promiscuous company and eating.

The banyan tree lives for 1,000 years and a fool lives for 80 years. What is the use of living here for so many years like a donkey, eating the same kind of food, drinking the same drinks and talking the same worldly rubbish, without having devotion to God and knowledge of Atman or the highest Self that shines in the chambers of your heart? What a disgraceful life you lead. Oh worldly minded, wake up! Do japa. Recite the name of the Lord at once. Praise His name. Sing His holy name. Chaitanya Maha Prabhu did this.

Nityananda, his disciple, also repeated the name of the Lord. Why do you not do likewise?

Prostrate before all with reverence. Feel you are actually prostrating before Lord Narayana when you touch the feet of others.

Touch the feet of all. This is an easy method for God-realisation.

Prostrate before anybody who comes before you, be it a man, an ass or a dog, because the Lord is seated in the hearts of all. Do it mentally before an ass, if you are afraid of a public scandal. It removes egoism, infuses humility, produces equal vision, fills the heart with bhakti and eventually leads to the attainment of God-consciousness.

You must not do any action which you are ashamed to tell in public. If you do any such action, this will retard your spiritual progress. Confess to the Lord all your sins, all your wickedness. Ask His forgiveness. Place yourself entirely in His hands. Repent with a contrite heart.

Mere right conduct is not in itself sufficient to bring about salvation. It must be leavened with faith and bhakti. Right conduct and right living prepare the mind for the reception of God. The ground is well prepared through right conduct. The seed of bhakti can be well sown in the heart of those who are of right conduct.

When you get a serious trouble or disease, you must at once thank God from the bottom of your heart. It is a blessing in disguise.

A bad Karma is thereby purged out and you will evolve quickly. You can proceed now with safety, with a line-clear ticket in the spiritual path. Further, this suffering will augment your power of endurance, mercy and faith in God, and remove the lurking egoism.

The world is like a mirage. You and I will pass away one of these days. There is no use of weeping for the death of your wife and relations.

Let us weep for forgetting God. Let us feel the burning fire of agony due to separation from the Lord. Weep more and more for God, like Mira and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Let the pillow be drenched with the blessed tears of divine love. Shed profuse tears in sincerity. You can hardly win Him by smiles. Read the life of Chaitanya Maha Prabhu. You will understand how he wept bitterly for darshan of Lord Hari. He used to roll himself in the dust. That is real devotion. Have you got a heart now to weep for the darshan of your beloved? Do not cheat yourself. You cannot cheat Him because He is the witness of all your thoughts. If your heart is still hard, melt it through japa, kirtan, study of Bhagavatam, satsang and service of bhaktas. Do not delay even a single second. Do the sadhana. Go to a lonely place and weep with sincerity. Weeping is one effective way to develop bhakti. It must be genuine. It must come out of a thirsting for God. Blessed are they who weep for God, for they are pure in heart. They shall see God.

Pray fervently like Prahlada. Sing His name like Radha. Chant the Lord's names (kirtan) like Gauranga. Sing of God like Ramprasad of Bengal. Dance in divine ecstasy like Chaitanya Maha Prabhu and enter into bhava samadhi. Repeat His name like Valmiki,

Tukaram and Ramdas.

Pray from the bottom of your heart. Repeat His verses and hymns. Control the senses. Eat simple food, wear simple clothing and lead a simple natural life. Combine all the love you cherish towards all worldly objects — wife, son, wealth, property, relatives, friends — and then apply this combined love towards God. You will realise Him in this very second.

You must have unstraying devotion. To love Krishna for three months, Rama for four months, Shakti for six months, and Lord Siva for some time, is of no use. If you love Krishna, love Him alone till the end.

Fix the mind at His Feet. Recognise His spirit always manifesting through you in the unceasing flow of breath, in the throbbing of your heart, in the glittering of the shining eyes which represent the windows of the soul. Thus let your life and work expand more fully day by day.

Even when you work, give your hands to work and the mind to God, like the harmonium player or typist who talks and plays at the same time. You will be able to do two things at a time by practice. You can train the mind in such a way that it can work with hand, and remember God at the same time.

Eleven Points for Developing Bhakti

It would be a gross mistake if you consor unakti as merely a state of emotionalism, when it is actually a thorough discipline and training of one's will and the mind, a sure means to intuitive realisation of God Almighty through intense love and affection for Him. It is a means to thorough apprehension of the true knowledge of the Reality, beginning from the ordinary form of idol worship right up to the highest form of cosmic realisation of your oneness with Him. You can achieve this by following the eleven fundamental factors which Sri Ramanuja had prescribed. They are — abhyasa (practice of continuous thinking of God), viveka (discrimination), vimoka (freedom from everything else and longing for God), satyam (truthfulness), arjavam (straightforwardness), kriya (doing good to others), kalyana (wishing well to all), daya (compassion), ahimsa (non-injury), dana (charity) and anavasada (cheerfulness and optimism).

Abhyasa or practice is a sustained and persistent effort to achieve mastery over a certain thing. Through continued practice the seeker (sadhak) tries to secure the steadiness of his mind, to restrain all its external movement, thereby converging it upon his one object — the Lord. Through persistent practice he checks the outgoing tendencies of his mind and diverts them inward; he constantly meditates upon the Lord.

Viveka or discrimination enables the seeker to choose between the right and the wrong; to follow and to adhere to what is right i.e., what should be done; and to abstain from what is wrong, i.e., what should not be done. How does he discriminate between the right and the wrong? That which elevates and takes him nearer to God, his ideal, that which brings him good, joy and peace, he considers as right and adheres to and acts in accordance with it. That which brings him depression, pain and restlessness, that which pricks his true conscience, that which drags him down from goodness and takes him away

from God, he considers as wrong and abstains from il completely and guards himself against its influence. As regards his bet, he discriminates between satvic food, (i.e., that which should be taken) and rajasic or tamasic food (that which should not be taken). Thus he discriminates between the right and the wrong, follows the directions of the wise, respects their warnings and obeys their admonitions and commandments. Thus he perseveres and strives to reach his goal, following the path of righteousness.

Vimoka is longing for God alone. Here the seeker renounces everything that does not accelerate his progress. Obviously he has to renounce what is earthly if he wishes to attain what is eternal, permanent and infinite. The seeker has to renounce all his desires and cravings for material objects. He has to renounce the evil thoughts of the mind through introspection and right exertion. Only then can he develop true longing for God, only then can he proceed Godwards. You cannot drink two things at a time in the same cup.

If you wish to progress Godwards, then, necessarily, you have to renounce all that is not conducive to your progress. This is the secret. To want nothing is the greatest and most efficacious way to attain the keenest longing for God.

Satyam or truthfulness is surely the prime postulate in spiritual practice. God is Truth: to realize Him, therefore, the seeker must need become the very embodiment of truth. He has to live the truth: he should have to think of truth alone, speak the truth and do what is right and true to his conscience.

Arjavam is straightforwardness or honesty. There is no place for deceit, crookedness or falsehood in the quest for God. God neither wants the seeker's riches nor intellect. He wants only a pure, truthful heart altogether shorn of deceit, shallowness and hypocrisy. There is nothing to hide from Him, for He is the all-knowing, all-pervading Spirit. The seeker's heart must be as pure as the white snow and as clear as crystal. Just as a clear and correct reflection cannot be seen in a corrugated, dust coated mirror, even so, if his heart is cobwebbed by selfish desires and dishonesty and corrugated by hypocrisy and crookedness, then he can hardly know the real nature of God. The seeker must cultivate a heart like that of a child.

Kriya or doing good to others comes next. A true devotee should behold Him in all, for He is the manifest form in whatever is perceived. The seeker's foremost duty is to do good and serve others, irrespective of any distinctions

of personal consideration. Serving and helping those in distress opens his eyes to the sorrows of human life. He begins to understand the painful nature of worldly existence.

The stony selfish heart learns to feel for others. Then compassion, mercy and love are nurtured in his heart. It becomes purified, and discrimination dawns in him.

Kalyana or wishing others well is another necessary qualification for the devotee. With a pure loving heart he should pray to the Lord for the good and well-being of others. He should first pray for others, for the peace and welfare of the world, and then for his evolution. He should not entertain any grudge or ill-feling towards others, but should wish for all that is good and auspicious.

This is the true spirit of a devotee.

Daya or compassion comes next. God is Love. He is compassion personified; and as the devotee seeks to realise Him, he must need become a veritable ocean of mercy and love. He must cultivate a heart as broad as the infinite sky. All the divine virtues that are necessary for one's evolution have their origin in ***ahimsa*** or non-violence. Ahimsa is a life-giving force.

Ill will, hatred, anger and malice cannot stand before its mighty potency. It is a special attribute of the soul. Practice of ahimsa culminates eventually in the realisation of unity and oneness of life.

It generates the feeling of universal brotherhood and cosmic love.

Next is ***dana*** or charity. 'Charity covereth a multitude of sins," proclaimed Jesus Christ. Abundant, spontaneous charity with a pure heart for relieving the suffering of the distressed, is a potent means to elevate the heart and to destroy its shallowness and impurities. The seeker must have a large heart. The more he gives, the more will come to him. This is the law of nature.

Anavasada is cheerfulness and hope. This is an essential virtue for a devotee. He must be optimistic, zealous and persevering.

There are many active forces that will oppose his progress and actually assail and pull him down. He must not lose hope or be depressed. There is no room for depression on the spiritual path.

He will have to brave the storm and proceed in spite of the difficulties and adverse conditions that try to come down to push him off the path of sadhana. With cheerful perseverance and optimistic zeal, relying on the inner self, he should proceed with his sadhana and ultimately he will succeed.

Six Classifications of Bhakti

There are six classifications in bhakti:
1. Apara (lower) and para (higher) bhakti
2.Ragatmika and vaidhi bhakti
3.Sakama and nishkama bhakti
4.Vyabhicharini and avyabhicharini bhakti
5. Mukhya (primary) and gauna (secondary) bhakti
6. Sattvic, rajasic and tamasic bhakti

Ragatmika bhakti is otherwise known as mukhya or primary bhakti. Apara bhakti is also primary devotion. Sakama bhakti is gauna or secondary devotion. Nishkama bhakti or avyabhicharini bhakti or para bhakti is otherwise known as ananya bhakti.
In ***apara bhakti*** the devotee is a neophyte. He has his own chosen ideal. He observes rituals and ceremonies. He rings bells, applies sandal-paste to the murthi and offers flowers, water and food.
He disciplines his mind by practising ahimsa (non-violence), truth, brahmacharya (chastity), charity and service, etc. He does not have an expanded heart. He is a sectarian. He has exclusive love and attachment to his own ideal. He dislikes other kinds of bhaktas who worship other devatas. He despises the ideal of others. For instance, a devotee of Lord Vishnu dislikes a devotee of Lord Siva and vice versa.
In one temple there was a combined murthi of Hari (Vishnu) and Hara (Siva). A devotee of Hari went to the temple and offered incense to the deity. He thought that the fumes might enter the nostrils of Lord Siva and so he plugged the nostrils of Siva with cotton. A bhakta of Siva entered the temple and offered incense. He similarly plugged the nostrils of Lord Hari with cotton to

prevent the fumes from entering Hari's nostrils. Both were petty-minded bhaktas of the apara type of bhakti.

There was a great saint in Benares. He was a para bhakta. His Ishta Devata was Lord Siva, but he was having Rama's picture for worship. He used to repeat Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya, the mantra of Lord Krishna. This appears very strange, but there is a great truth behind it. This gives instruction to us that we should see Siva in Rama and Krishna. A worshipper of Lord Krishna should see Krishna in Rama, Siva and Durga. Such a bhakta is a real devotee with expanded heart. He will not become a narrow-minded orthodox sectarian.

Para bhakti is the highest form of bhakti. Ordinary bhakti which begins with the worship of idols with sandal paste, flowers and arati (waving of lamps), ultimately culminates in para bhakti.

A devotee of this type does not worship idols nor ring bells. He does not visit temples nor go on pilgrimage. He does not wear marks on his forehead, nor is he bound by any rules or conventions.

Para bhakti is the culminating point in devotion. Nam Dev, Tukaram, Ram Das, Tusidas and Hafiz were para bhaktas.

Para bhakti is nirguna bhakti which is free from the three gunas (or attributes). It is the spontaneous, unbroken flow of pure love towards God. It is free from any sort of motive altogether. It is spontaneous devotion towards God. This type of devotee does not care for manifestations of divine power, even if they are offered. He wants to serve God and to see His face always. He wants the lotus feet of the Lord. He does not want absolute independence, but pure divine love. God is the be-all and end-all of the devotee of para bhakti.

A devotee of para bhakti type has cosmic love which is all-embracing and all-inclusive. The whole world is Brindavan for him.

He beholds Lord Hari or Lord Krishna everywhere. He beholds himself as Lord Krishna. Nammalvar had this experience. He would caress the earth and say, "O! This is Vamana's earth.

" He would

point to the sky and exclaim: "Lo, this is His Vaikuntha!" He would caress the cool breeze and say, "This is my Achyuta." He consciously embraced the flames and said, "O deathless Ananta." He raised his hands to the ocean and

cried, "Behold the sea where my supreme Lord reposes." He pointed to the hill and said, "Come, majestic Hari; see, my Vishnu has come." When he saw a black mass of cloud he said,
"That is my Lord Krishna.
Namadev was a devotee of para bhakti. He saw Lord Krishna everywhere. When a dog ran away with the dry bread, he ran with a cup of ghee to soften the bread with ghee. He saw Lord Krishna in the dog. Tukaram was a para bhakta. He said, "Just as sugar pervades the sugar cane juice, Lord Krishna pervades the whole world." Prahlada saw his Lord in the pillar, and so he said to his father, "Lord Krishna is in the pillar." Prahlada's devotion was the supreme form of devotion.
A devotee of para bhakti has not got the slightest dislike for any creature on this earth. He radiates abundant love to all. He has a large heart. He embraces all with love. For him snakes, disease and pain are sweet messengers from God. He welcomes them with love.
He has no other thoughts save thoughts of God. When oil is poured from one vessel to another vessel, there is one continuous stream.
Even so, in para bhakti or supreme love the devotee has an unbroken thought-current of God and God alone. Just as an unbroken, continuous sound vibrates when the bell is rung, so also an unbroken, continuous thought-current of God alone flows from the mind of a devotee of para bhakti.
The God-intoxicated bhakta gives up all ceremonies and rituals. He is drunk with the wine of love. He is drinking the nectar of divine love. He is full of tears. He is ever looking at the sweet face of the Lord. When he is in communion with the Lord all throughout the day and the night, what has he to do with beads, flowers, bells, water for sipping and food for offering and other modes of worship?
Para bhakti cannot be attained in a day or two. It takes a very long time for its development. One has to pass through the preliminary stages of bhakti. He must visit temples, do perambulation, offer flowers and sandal paste and do arati. He must serve bhaktas, do japa, chant the Lord's names and meditate. He must practise the nine-modes of devotion. He must study Ramayana, Bhagavatam and other holy scriptures which treat of bhakti. By listening to and singing the glories of Krishna, a natural feeling of love for Him is created.

This feeling of affection (rati) gets intensified and is known by the names 'bhav'
'prem' and 'maha bhav'. Spiritual evolution is
gradual. The sin-hardened heart must be softened. The course of bhakti discipline must be thoroughly undergone with faith, interest and zeal. Then alone will his bhakti blossom into para bhakti or supreme devotion.
Para bhakti and jnana are one. A jnani says, "All indeed is Brahman." A devotee of para bhakti declares, "The whole world is Vishnu only," and "All indeed is Vasudeva."
In ***vaidhi bhakti*** the devotee observes rules and ceremonies and has certain restrictions, but when the vaidhi bhakti reaches its full growth it becomes para bhakti. Vaidhi bhakti is bhakti as a form of discipline.
In ***ragatmika bhakti*** there are no fetters or shackles, barriers of customs, or rules of society. There is no binding of any sort. There is an absolutely free flow of divine love. The devotee cares not a jot for public opinion; he is above public criticism. He is as simple as a child. The devotee is intoxicated with divine love. He exuberantly pours forth his love towards his Beloved.
The simple-hearted cow-maids of Brindavan and Mira had ragatmika bhakti. Though Mira was a rani she never cared for the opinion of the public and her relations and husband. When she was under intoxication of divine love for Krishna she danced in the streets and open places amidst men and ordinary people. They were not able to gauge the depths of her heart. Even bhaktas were not able to fathom out the recesses of the innermost chambers of her heart, the depth of her unbounded love for Lord Krishna. Her thrilling devotional songs, which bring tears to the eyes of the hearers, bespeak clearly the exalted state of her heart that was deeply saturated with the nectar of devotion towards Lord Krishna. She says: "I have none else for me besides my Giridhar Gopal (Krishna)." Can anyone fully understand God-intoxicated Mira?
Showing devotion to God for getting riches or son or for removal of suffering from diseases is ***sakama bhakti***. Sakama bhakti will eventually terminate in nishkama bhakti. ***Nishkama bhakti*** is very very rare. Only Prahlada had this kind of bhakti. There is no bargaining or motive in this. It is love for love's sake, it is love without attachment. But sakama bhakti (devotion with expectation of wealth, son, honour, removal of disease or distress) can be

transmuted into nishkama bhakti in the long run. Dhruva had sakama bhakti. He wanted a kingdom. When he saw Lord Narayana face to face his sakama bhakti became converted into nishkama and all desires melted. What more does a man want when he gets eternal satisfaction and the highest bliss? Prahlada later on meditated on his own Self as Lord Hari. This is abheda bhakti, the advanced stage of devotion.

To love God for sometime and then wife, children and property for sometime, is ***vyabhicharini bhakti***. To love God and God alone for ever and ever is ***avyabhicharini bhakti.*** Mark this carefully! Para bhakti and avyabhicharini bhakti are one and the same.

Sandilya mentions ***mukhya (primary) bhakti*** and ***gaund (secondary) bhakti.*** Primary devotion is attachment to the Lord. It is single-minded devotion. It is one-pointed, whole-hearted devotion to God. Primary devotion is the principal because others
are subservient to it.

Narada also classifies bhakti into two kinds, primary and secondary. Secondary devotion is of three kinds according to ***sattva, rajas*** and ***tamas*** in the devotee; or it is of three kinds accordingly: the distressed (arta), the seeker after knowledge (jijnasu) and the selfish (artharthi). The first three classifications are mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita. "Fourfold in division are the righteous ones who worship Me, O Arjuna. The distressed, the seeker for knowledge, the selfish and the wise." (VII-16).

The devotion of the distressed, the seeker after knowledge and the selfish man is after all secondary, as they have ulterior, selfish motives in view. The devotion of the wise is pure and absolutely unselfish. It is para bhakti or primary devotion. The wise man has undivided love and whole-hearted devotion to the Lord. He is eternally united with Him. God is the dearest to him and he is the dearest to God. Lord Krishna says: "Noble are all these, but I hold the wise as verly Myself: for, steadfast in mind, he is established in Me alone as the supreme goal."' (VII-18).

In ***sattvic bhakti*** the quality of sattva predominates in the bhakta. He worships God to please Him, to destroy subtle desires, (vasanas) etc.

In ***rajasic bhakti*** the quality of rajas predominates in the devotee. He worships God to get estates, wealth, name and fame.

In ***tamasic bhakti*** the quality of tamas predominates in the devotee. He is actuated by wrath, arrogance, jealousy and malice in showing devotion to God. To worship God for destroying one's enemy and for getting success in an enterprise through unlawful means, is tamasic bhakti. The thief prays to God: "O God Ganesha!
Let me get something tonight. I will offer Thee 100 coconuts." This is tamasic bhakti.
All these three types of bhakti are secondary devotion only.
When a devotee has devotion for Lord Hari, Lord Siva, Devi, Lord Rama and Lord Krishna and thinks that Lord Hari is Siva, Rama, Devi or Krishna, this is ***samarasa bhakti***. This is also an advanced stage of devotion. He has equal vision. He makes no difference between Rama and Krishna, between Siva and Hari, between Krishna and Devi. He knows and feels that Radha, Sita and Durga are all inseparable shaktis of Lord Krishna, Rama and Siva respectively. Just as you see wood alone in chairs, tables, doors, windows and bed-steads; and clay alone in earthen jars, pots and jugs, so also see Lord Krishna alone in all the every thing, in every nieces. see tor knd in every face, in every thing, in every motion, in she ments, emotions, feelings and all vibrations of speech. This n caled ***ananya bhakti***. Ananya bhakti is the same as para bhakti and avyabhicharini bhakti.

Nine Modes of Worship

Devotion to God is developed in nine different ways. It is supreme attachment to God with intense inner feeling. Intense love is the common factor in all the nine modes. Exclusive love for God is expressed through various methods. All bhaktas of this type are above the formalities of the world. They are untouched by the laws of human rules of right and wrong, and are out-and-out concerned with God. In illustration of this there is a verse, the free translation of which is: "What was the conduct of the fowler? What was the age of Dhruva? What was the learning possessed by Gajendra? What was the caste of Vidura? What was the effort done by Ugrasena? What was the bodily beauty of Kubja? What was the wealth of Sudama? Lord Madhava is satisfied only with intense devotion (bhakti), not with other qualities possessed by persons."

The fowler was a killer of animals. Dhruva was a boy of five years. Gajendra was an elephant devoid of scholarship. Vidura was a sudra by caste. Ugrasena did no self-effort but simply sat without doing anything. Kubja was a very ugly woman with hunchback.

Sudama was one of the poorest of men. But the Lord did not consider these defects of His devotees. He took only their devotion and sent His blessings upon them all.

Good conduct which is in accordance with perfect moral law is an auxilliary to pure bhakti and it follows the true bhakta wherever he goes. One cannot develop true devotion to God if he is crooked in his heart, if he has got objects of love in this world, if he is tempted by charming worldly things, if he wishes to take care of his wife, children and relatives, if he wishes to feed his body well, if he wishes to earn a great name in the world, if he wants to establish a permanent fame on earth and if he does not like to part with the alluring contents of the world, Perfect detachment from all objects is a preliminary to real devotion. Vairagya is the product of real love for God. One who has love for the world cannot have love for God.

Where there is kama (desire), there cannot be Rama, and where there is Rama there cannot be kama. Love for the world and love for God are diametrically opposite things. One has to be renounced for the attainment of the other. This renunciation can be acquired
through the nine forms of bhakti.

In the Srimad Bhagavatam and the Vishnu Purana it is told that the nine forms of bhakti are sravana (hearing of God's lilas and stories), kirtana (singing of His glories), smarana (rememberance of His name and presence), padasevana (service of His feet), archana (worship of God), vandana (prostration to the Lord), dasya (cultivating the inner attitude of a servant with God), sakhya (cultivating the attitude of a friend) and atmanivedana (complete surrender of the self).

A devotee can practise any method of bhakti which suits him best. Through that he will attain divine illumination.

Sravana, hearing of stories of the Lord, includes hearing of God's virtues, glories and sports, and stories connected with His divine name and form. The devotee gets absorbed in the hearing of divine stories and his mind merges in

the thought of divinity. It cannot think of undivine things. The mind is no longer charmed by the world. The devotee remembers God only, even in dream.

The devotee should sit before a learned teacher who is a great saint, and hear divine stories. He should hear them with a sincere heart devoid of the sense of criticism of fault-finding. The devotee should try his best to live in the ideals preached in the scriptures.

Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: "Know that by long prostration, by service and enquiry, the wise who know the Truth shall instruct thee in that wisdom." (IV-34).

One cannot attain savana bhakti without the company of saints or wise men. Mere reading for oneself is not of much use. Doubts will crop up. They cannot be solved by one's own self very easily. An experienced man is necessary to instruct the devotee in the right path.

Sankaracharya says: "The company of the wise (satsang), even for a moment, becomes the boat to cross the ocean of samsara." Without satsang, sadhana (spiritual practices) does not become perfect and strong. The fort of sadhana should be built on the foundation of satsang. Mere austerities are not the end of sadhana.

Satsang illumines the devotee and removes his impurities. It is only then that subtle truths are grasped well by him. Lord Krishna says to Uddhava that nothing but satsang alone can at an end to all worldly attachments. In the Bhagavaram it is told that the best dharma in this world is to hear the Lord's glories, for thereby one attains to the divine abode.

King Parikshit attained liberation through sravana. He heard the glories of God from Suka Maharishi and his heart was purified He attained the abode of Lord Vishnu in Vaikuntha. He became liberated and enjoyed the supreme bliss.

Kirtan is singing the Lord's glories. The devotee is thrilled with divine emotion. He loses himself in the love of God. He gets horripilation in the body due to extreme love of God. He weeps while in the middle of the kirtan when thinking of the glory of God. His voice becomes choked and he flies into a state of divine ecstacy. He is ever engaged in japa of the Lord's name and in describing His glories to one and all. Wherever he goes he begins to sing and

praise God. He requests all to join his kirtan. He sings and dances in ecstacy. He makes others also dance.

Such practices should be the outcome of a pure heart and should not be merely a show. God knows the inner secret of all and none can cheat Him. There should be perfect straightforwardness, and all actions should be natural outpouring from the heart. This is the easiest of all modes of approach to God. In the Kali Yuga (Iron Age) kirtan alone is the best yoga, it is the prescribed method of devotion. The mind is ever intent upon singing the Lord's names and glories, and it has no occasion to take interest in things of the world. Day and night the devotee feels the presence of God and thins out his ego. He becomes pure at heart.

Great divine persons like Narada, Valmiki and Sukadeva in ancient times, and Gouranga, Nanak, Tulsidas and Surdas, etc., in comparatively recent times, have all attained perfection through kirtan bhakti alone. Even the great sinner Ajamila crossed the ocean of samsara (worldly existence) by repetition of the Lord's name. If even sinners can cross this maya through devotion to God, what in speak of good persons who have a pure heart, who have served their guru and the country, and who are nearer to God than sinners?

Kirtan is a very effective method of devotion for another reason:

Man is an erotic being. He loves and loves. He cannot but love things of the world. But his love is only passion and is not pure divis love. He wants to hear sweet music, see beautiful objects and wants to witness a dance. Music melts the heart of even the stone-hearted man. If at all there is anything in this world which can change the heart of a man in a very quick time, it is music and dance. This very method is made use of in kirtan bhakti but it is directed towards God instead of towards sensual enjoyments. Man's emotion is directed towards divinity and his love for music and singing is not destroyed. Sudden destruction of such a sentiment which he holds as very dear will not prove successful in making him perfect. Kirtan is sweet and pleasant and easily changes the heart. Suka Maharishi is an example of a kirtan bhakta. He narrated the Srimad Bhagavatam to Parikshit. At the time of reciting the Bhagavatam, he was fully in the superconscious state attained by bhaktas through intense divine emotion. It is told in the Bhagavata Mahatmya that when Sri Suka was singing the glories of the Lord the devas themselves came

down from heaven and took part in the kirtan with various musical instruments. Narada played his vina and Indra played the mridanga. Prahlada danced with his cymbals and Lord Siva himself began His dance. Lord Vishnu was present. All those assembled there were thrilled by the occasional dance of Sri Suka himself.

Kirtan is the most suitable method even for householders. It gives pleasure to the mind and at the same time purifies the heart.

This has double effect. Kirtan is perhaps the best method suited for all people without distinction.

Smarana is remembrance of the Lord at all times. This is unbroken memory of the name and form of the Lord. The mind does not think of any object of the world, but is ever engrossed in thinking of the glorious Lord alone. The mind meditates on what is heard about the glories of God and His virtues, names etc., and forgets even the body, contenting itself with the remembrance of God, just as Dhruva or Prahlada did. Even japa is only remembrance of God, and comes under this category of bhakti. Remembrance also includes hearing of stories pertaining to God, talking of God, teaching to others what pertains to God, meditation on the attributes of God, etc. Remembrance has no particular time. God is to be remembered at all times without break, so long as one has got his consciousness intact. Right from his getting up from sleep in the morning until he is completely overpowered by sleep in the night, a person is to remember God. He has no other duty in this world.

Remembrance of God alone can destroy all worldly tendencies. Remembrance of God alone can turn the mind away from sense objects. Generally the mind runs outwards; but remembrance of Good makes it introverted and does not allow it to run to particular objects of the world.

Remembrance of God is a very difficult method of sadhana. It is not possible to remember God at all times. The mind will cheat the person. He will think that he is meditating on God, but actually he will be dreaming of some object of the world or something connected with name and fame. Remembrance is equal to concentration or meditation. All the qualities which a raja yogi prescribes for the practice of meditation should be acquired by a bhakta who wants to practise smarana bhakti. Smarana is swimming against the forceful current of

the river of maya. It leads to exclusive meditation on God, as is done in raja yoga.

Company
of real devotees is another auxilliary in the
remembrance of God. Service of mahatmas is still another necessity.

The mind cannot but remember divine things when it is in the company of divine people. Therefore one should have satsang and should always live with a saint or a great bhakta. He should not be perturbed by censure or ridicule from the world. He should rely on God and rest assured that God will help him in all troubles and He will give him final emancipation.

Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita:" O Arjuna! He who, fixing his mind on Me, constantly remembers Me, I am easily attained by that jogt, ever united with Me." (VIII: 14).

The Bhagavad Gita is an authority on the nine modes of bhakti.

Lord Krishna illustrates that the various modes of devotion shall lead one to the Supreme. Remembrance of the Lord has given liberation even to those who remembered Him through hatred, even as a worm, through meditation on the wasp through hatred and fear, attains the state of the wasp. Haters of the Lord like Kamsa and Sisupala had attained the state of liberation through ***vaira bhakti*** (devotion in the form of enmity). Constant remembrance is the fruit of almost all other methods of practice in spiritual sadhana. This is the most potent method and the most difficult also.

The miser does not forget his wealth even if he is engaged in other duties. The lustful man does not forget his beloved, and the cow does not forget its calf even while grazing. Even so a worldly man should practise the remembrance of God, even though he may be engaged in other duties of life.

Prahlada practised the remembrance of God. He never forgot God at any time. His cruel father punished him in all possible ways, but the devoted Prahlada crossed over all troubles and obtained the supreme grace of the Lord. He was lost in the consciousness of God.

Such should be the ardent aspiration of all devotees. The seventh skandha of the Bhagavatam gives a beautiful description of how Prahlada practised bhakti even amidst trying conditions.

Padasevana is serving the Lord's feet. Actually this can be done only by Lakshmi or Parvati. No mortal being has got the good fortune to practise this method of bhakti, for the Lord is not visible to the physical eyes. But it is possible to serve the image of God in idols, and better still, taking the whole of humanity as God. This is padasevana. Padasevana is service of the sick and the poor. It is service of the whole humanity at large. The whole universe is only the Lord in His form as the manifested universe. Service of the world is service of the Lord.

Service of the Lord's feet can be done through formal worship to murthis (or idols) in temples, or to a mental image of God.

Observing the sacred feet of the Lord again and again with devotional and eager eyes; worshipping them and serving them; sipping the sacred water with which the Lord's feet have been washed; worshipping the wooden sandals of the Lord, meditating on them and praying to them; taking the dust of the Lord's feet and applying it to the forehead; washing the heart with the dust of the Lord's feet; respecting the holy shrines and places of pilgrimage and places where God incarnated Himself for the good of humanity; regarding the Ganges as directly flowing from the feet of the Lord; worshipping, bathing in and drinking of such divine water of the Ganges — all these are different forms of serving the Lord's feet.

This kind of devotion destroys all worldly attachments and allows the mind to exclusively think of God.

Bharata served the sandals of the feet of Sri Rama. What great devotion! He kept them on the throne and worshipped them as representing Sri Rama Himself. He ruled the kingdom in the name of Sri Rama's sandals, himself acting only as the servant of Rama.

This is padasevana bhakti. Ahalya felt her life fulfilled, having obtained the dust of the Lord's feet. Srimad Bhagavatam says: *"He who has taken shelter in the feet of the Lord, which is the refuge of saints and full of blessedness, for him the ocean of worldly existence becomes as shallow as the hoof-print of a calf. The supreme state is already attained by him. Words, miseries and difficulties do not appear before him."*

Sri Lakshmi-devi is enjoying this practice of devotion as she is ever serving the feet of Lord Hari. Lord Vishnu is resting His feet on the lap of Sri Lakshmi. She is the example of one engaged in padasevana-bhakti.

Archana is worship of the Lord. " Those who perform the worship of Vishnu in this world attain the immortal and blissful state of liberation." Thus says the Vishnu-Rahasya. Worship can be done either through an image or a picture or even a mental form. The image should be one appealing to the mind of the worshipper.

Worship can be done either with external materials or merely through a strong internal feeling. The latter one is an advanced form of worship which only men of purified intellect can do. Worship should be done according to the rules laid down; or, in the case of advanced devotees, worship can be done in any manner they like.

The purpose of worship is to please the Lord, and to purify the heart through surrender of the ego and love of God.

Serving the poor and worshipping saints is also worship of the Lord in His form as the manifested universe. The Lord appears in all forms. He is everything. The scriptures declare that the Lord alone appears as the sentient and the insentient beings. The devotee should have the feeling of seeing the Lord only, in all beings. He should consider all creatures, even down to the worm, as merely God. This is the highest form of worship.

Worship is generally done through the tantric or the vedic method. It can be done either in a temple or in one's own house, or even at any place outside. The object of worship is sincere devotion and real surrender for the sake of union with the Lord.

During worship the mind of the devotee should be always concentrated on the form of the Lord. It should think of His

think of earthly things.

attributes, His infinite nature, bliss, immortality, etc. It should not The food offered to the Lord during worship is actually taken away by Him when it is offered with sincere feeling. There are cases where devotees with burning love for God offered food to God and He actually appeared before them in His supreme form and partook of the food offered to Him. These are rare cases, but it must be known that true devotees are very rare in this world.

Devotees like Prithu and Ambarisha practised archana or worship of the Lord. Their stories are found in the Srimad Bhagavatam. The Lord appeared before Prithu, the first king of the world, and gave him His blessings. The Lord protected Ambarisha and gave him emancipation. They were immersed in the love of God and they wanted nothing but God. They did not crave for worldly things from God but wanted only His grace. They wanted to please God and serve Him. Nothing else did they want. Such should be the devotion of all bhaktas of selfless motive.

Offerings to God need not necessarily be rich and costly things.

What did the Lord of elephants (Gajendra) offer? Only a flower from the pond. Draupadi offered a vegetable leaf and Sabari some wild plums. But the Lord was pleased. It is the feeling of love for Him that God takes into account and not the material that is offered. He is pleased even with leaves and mere water.

Vandana is prayer and prostration. Humble prostration touching the earth with the eight limbs of the body (sashtang-namaskara), with faith and reverence - before a form of God, or to all beings knowing them to be the forms of the one God - and getting absorbed in the divine love of the Lord, is termed prostration to God. The Bhagavatam says: "The sky, air, fire, water, earth, stars, planets, the cardinal points (directions), trees, rivers, seas and all living beings constitute the body of Sri Hari. The devotee should bow before everything in absolute devotion, thinking that he is bowing before God Himself." Lord Krishna says to Uddhava: "Giving no attention to those who laugh in ridicule, forgetting the body and insensible to shame, one should prostrate and bow down to all beings — even to the dog, the ass, the pariah and the cow. All is Myself; nothing is, but Myself."

Arjuna does prostration of Krishna in a most beautiful manner:

"Salutation to You from the front, salutation to You from behind, salutation to You from every side! O All! Immeasurable in strength, You pervade All. You are all!' Bhagavad Gita (XI-40).

The object or purpose of this form of devotion is to realise God through exclusive love. The Mahabharata says: "There is nothing which is more auspicious than Bhagavan Vasudeva, (the Lord) there is nothing

hone purijing than Vasudeu, and there is no deua worthy of being worshipped higher than Vasudeva. He who offers his salutations to Vasudeia suffers no afflictions."

Bhishma says: "Even one bend of the head to Lord Sri Krishna is equal in merit to the completion of ten horse sacrifices. The latter does not bring about liberation, but the former makes one God Himself."

Akrura practised vandana bhakti. His story is given in the Srimad Bhagavatam. The Bhagavatam says: "Overwhelmed with his devout love, Akrura quickly jumped down from the chariot and fell prostrate like a pole at the feet of Balarama and Sri Krishna." In the Mahabharata it is told that the old warrior Bhishma offered his salutation to the Lord in a voice choked with deep emotion and Sri Krishna immediately favoured him with the light of divine knowledge: "Having thus offered his prayer to the Lord, Bhishma, whose mind was wholly absorbed in God, said: 'Salutations to Krishna' and bowed his head to Him. Learning the depth of Bhishma's devotion through His power of yoga, Sri Krishna bestowed upon Bhishma the light of divine knowledge which illumines the three worlds." The ego or ahamkara is effaced completely through devout prayer and prostration to God. Divine grace descends upon the devotee and man becomes God.

Dasya bhakti is the love of God through servant-sentiment. To serve God and carry out His wishes, realising His virtues, nature, mystery and glory, considering oneself as a slave of God the supreme Master, is dasya bhakti. Serving and worshipping the murthis (images) in temples, sweeping the temples, meditating on God and mentally serving Him like a slave, serving the saints and the sages, serving the devotees of God, is also included in dasya bhakti.

To follow the words of the scriptures, to act according to the injunctions of the Vedas, considering them to be direct words of God, is dasya bhakti.

Association with and service of love-intoxicated devotees and service of those who have knowledge of God, is dasya bhakti. The purpose behind dasya bhakti is to be ever with God in order to offer services to Him and win His divine grace and attain immortality thereby.

Arjuna prays with a sentiment of a slave, a servant and a disciple, in order to get the grace of Lord Krishna: "O Lord! I am your disciple, I have taken refuge

in You. Teach me." This should be the feeling of a bhakta. He should completely give himself up to God and should not retain any personal reservations with Him. Ananyabhakti is total relinquishment of the self to God. Lakshmana,
Hanuman, Angada, etc. cultivated this dasya
bhava. Lakshmana could not even speak to Rama at times in his extreme love for Rama and the humiliation of his self before Rama.
Hanuman is a towering example of divine service to the Lord. He spent his whole life in serving Lord Rama. Angada did not want to leave Rama even at the latter's request, and prayed to Lord Rama that he would serve Him at all times, that he would do even the most menial of services for the sake of Lord Rama. These devotees were of an exceptional type and it is very difficult to develop such a bhakti as was possessed by them. The heart has to be purified, the mind has to be thinned out, desires have to be annihilated. It is then that the devotee feels his real love for God. Before such a purification the love of God becomes coloured with earthliness and does not bear the expected fruit. Total surrender is the ideal of dasya bhakti. The servant loses nothing but gains everything through the service of God, either in His transcendental or His immanent aspect.
Sakhya bhava is the cultivation of the friend sentiment with God. The inmates of the family of Nanda-Gopa cultivated this bhakti, as did Arjuna. The Bhagavatam says: "Oh, how wonderful is the fortune of the people of Vraja, of cowherd Nanda, whose dear friend is the perfect eternal Brahman of absolute bliss!''
To be always with the Lord, to treat Him as one's own dear relative or a friend belonging to one's own family, to be in His company at all times, to love Him as one's own Self, is sakhya bhava. The devotee of sakhya bhava takes up with eagerness any work of the Lord, leaving aside even the most important and urgent and pressing work, assuming an attitude of neglect towards personal work and totally concerning himself with the love of the Lord. How do friends — real friends — love in this world? What an amount of love they possess between one another. Such a love is developed towards God instead of towards man. Physical love is turned into spiritual love. There is a transformation of the mundane into the Eternal.

The devotee considers all his actions 'as merely nothing', even if he has done really a superhuman act. He always does what may please God in all respects. He considers all as God. He treats every being of the world as his own relative and friend. He treats everyone as belonging to himself. There is no selfishness, no hatred, no separateness in him. He becomes one with all in feeling. He loves all,for all are his friends. All is God; and God is the supreme Friend. He is always satisfied with what is ordained by God and he is supremely joyful if anything of his own becomes useful in the service of God. He feels that God has similar powers over his belongings as he has got himself. He moves with God and treats God not as a dignified, terrifying, hard taskmaster, but a friend, sweet and loving. He longs to see God. He does not want to leave the Lord even for a moment.

He says, "My Lord! My Beloved! How can I live without Thee? My Dear! Where are you?" and loses himself in the love of his Beloved He considers that his existence and the existence of what belongs to him is fruitful only if it is useful in the service of God, for he cannot live without God. To live without God is an impossibility. God is the innermost and the dearest of friends. All friends may desert a person, but God will never desert his devotees. He loves you even if you do not love Him. The devotee feels himself merged in the ocean of joy on seeing, touching or thinking of the Beloved. Mere hearing of His name kindles the devotee's love for Him. He jumps and sings in ecstasy. He is overwhelmed with joy when anybody brings a message of the Beloved. He feels anguish at his separation from the Beloved and is ever expecting to meet Him. These are some of the characteristics of a bhakta who follows the sakhya bhava.

Vibhishana, Sugriva, Uddhava, Arjuna, Sudama, Sridama and the playmates of the Lord in Vraja are examples of devotees who cultivated the friend-sentiment of bhakti.

Find out where your love lies, whom you love most in the world Adopt the same love-attitude towards God, your indweller, your Lord, your real friend, who resides within your heart. Love for your friends and relations is moha or deluded attachment. It binds you fast to the wheel of samsara. It is fleeting and is fraught with all sorts of unpleasant consequences. Love of god is liberating, it will lead you to perennial bliss and immortality. It is bhakti which will bring

about an eternal union between you and the supreme Lord of the universe. It will enable you to realise your identity with Him.

Atma nivedana is self-surrender. In the Vishnu Sahasranam it is said: "The heart of one who has taken refuge in Vasudeva and who is wholly devoted to Vasudeva gets entirely purified, and he attains Brahman the Eternal."

The devotee offers everything to God, including his body, mind and soul. He keeps nothing for himself. He loses even his own self. He has no personal and independent existence. He has given up his self for God. He has become part and parcel of God. God takes care of him and treats him as Himself. Grief and sorrow, pleasure and pain the devotee treats as gifts sent by God, and does not attach himself to them.

He considers himself as a puppet of God and an instrument in the hands of God. He does not feel egoistic, for he has no ego. His ego has gone over to God. It is not his duty to take care of his wife, children, etc. for he himself has no independent existence apart from God. God will take care of all - He knows how to lead the world in the right path. One need not think that he is born to lead the world. God is there. He will look to everything which man cannot even dream of.

In self-surrender the devotee has no sensual craving, for he has no body as it is offered to God. He does not adore or love his body for it is God's business to see to it. He only feels the presence of God and nothing else. He is fearless, for God is helping him at all times. He has no enemy, for he has given himself up to God who has no enemies or friends. He has no anxiety, for he has attained everything by attaining the grace of God. He has not even the thought of salvation; rather he does not want salvation even, he merely wants God and nothing but God. He is satisfied with the love of God, for by that there is nothing that is not attained. What is there to be attained, when God has sent His grace upon the devotee? The devotee does not want to become sugar, but to taste sugar. There is pleasure in tasting sugar, but not in becoming sugar itself. So the devotee feels that there is more supreme joy in loving God than becoming God. God shall take complete care of the devotee. "I am thine," says the devotee.

This self-surrender is absolute love for God exclusively. There is nothing but God-consciousness in the devotee. Even against his own wishes the devotee

shall become one with God and lose his individuality. This is the law of being. The highest Truth is absoluteness and the soul rises above through different states of consciousness until it attains absolute perfection, when it becomes identical with God. This is the culmination of all aspiration and love.

There are innumerable verses in the Bhagavad Gita and Bhagavatam establishing the truth that self-surrender is the only way to attain the Supreme. Krishna teaches Arjuna that total and exclusive self-surrender alone can give him peace and relieve him from all sins.

One who studies the Bhagavad Gita and the Srimad Bhagavaram will come to know what a great importance is given to total self-surrender; for self-surrender is the annihilation individual consciousness and the attainment of consciousness. This is equal to nirvikalpa-samadhi or direa coalisation. The devotee flies to the state of supreme devotion and merges himself in God. The wave subsides in the ocean, the spark becomes one with fire, the ray is absorbed into the sun, the mind merges in Atman, the individual loses himself in the Absolute and becomes one with God. Worldly consciousness vanishes into universal consciousness. Man becomes God, and the mortal becomes immortal.

Whatever belongs to God becomes the belonging of the highest devotee. All his sins are destroyed. He has no duties to perform. He is a perfected soul. He is the most blessed. To him the whole world appears as mere bliss. There is only the manifestation of supreme
love.

The gopis and the emperor Bali practised this love. The gopis lost themselves in Krishna. Bali offered his self to the Lord. The gopis lost themselves in God-consciousness and attained the Supreme.

The nine modes of bhakti are the ways in which a devotee attains the supreme ideal of life. Any devotee can take up any of these paths and reach the highest state.

The path of bhakti is the easiest of all and is not very much against the nature of the human inclinations. It slowly and gradually takes the individual to the Supreme without frustrating his human instincts. It is not direct assertion of God, but a progressive realisation of Him.

In these nine modes, too, you will find a synthesis of the three main yogas — karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga.
Padasevana and dasya are the sadhanas of karma yoga. The Lord is seated in all hearts. How are you to serve His feet, except through the service of every being in the world? Dasya is regarding oneself as the servant of the Lord. The Lord is in everyone. Therefore one should gladly, cheerfully and willingly serve all. This is karma yoga.
Kirtan, archana, vandana and sakhya are limbs of bhakti yog.
Sravanam, smaranam and Atma-nivedanam constitute the three-fold process of jnana yoga sadhana, viz. savana, manana and nidhidhyasana. Everywhere you will find synthesis. In this Kali Yuga, the yoga of synthesis alone is the best to adopt if you wish to have rapid spiritual
progress.

Nine Modes According to Tulsidas

Lord Rama gave the following as the nine modes of devotion, when He met Sabari:

1. The society of realised saints.
2. The recitation of the Lord's glories.
3. Devotional service to god.
4. Faithful and devoted singing of His divine qualities.
5. Japa or repetition of His name with firm faith, according to the Vedas.
6. Strict self-discipline through the practice of perfect withdrawal of the senses and the mind from worldly activities. This is the duty of the good, in all circumstances.
7. The practice of perceiving the whole world in the Lord and of regarding the saints as more venerable than the Lord himself. It is visualising the macrocosm in the microcosm.
8. Contentment and cheer in whatever one gets, and never finding faults in others.
9. To deal without trick or fraud with one and all, to depend upon Him and to be indifferent to pleasure and pain.

Whoever practises any one of these nine, be he a man or a woman or an animate or inanimate creature, is most dear to Him.

Four Kinds of Bhaktas

Bhaktas or devotees of God are of four types: arta, jijnasu, artharthi and jnani. Arta is the distressed devotee who is suffering very much and who craves for the grace of God in order to get himself relieved from pain and sorrow. Jijnasu is the seeker after knowledge who feels that he is ignorant, and who wants the grace of God in order to have wisdom. Artharthi is the seeker of wealth, who longs for earthly possessions, money and land, etc., in order to enjoy a happy life, and who propitiates God to get His grace to arman wealth. The jnani is the wise, the sage who is satisied with the Self, who is contented in the Self, who is freed from desires, who has fulfilled all desires, whose only desire is the Self and who consider his own Self as the all-inclusive God.

The distressed is he who is suffering from a chronic incurable disease, whose life is in jeopardy on account of earthquake, volcanic eruption, thunder, attack by a dacoit or enemy, tiger etc. Draupadi and Gajendra are examples of arta-bhaktas. When Dusshasana dragged her before the court of the Kauravas and tried to pull her sari off Draupadi cried for Krishna in order to guard her respect, Gajendra called on Narayana when a crocodile was dragging him into the water.

Jijnasu is the enquirer. He is dissatisfied with the world. There is a void in his life. He always feels that sensual pleasure is not the highest form of happiness and there is yet pure eternal bliss unmixed with grief and pain, which is to be found within. Uddhava was a jijnasu. He was dissatisfied with the world and got wisdom from Sri Krishna. This is recorded in the Bhagavatam.

The seeker after wealth craves for money, wife, children, position, name and fame. Sugriva, Vibhishana and Dhruva were artharthi-bhaktas. Sugriva wanted to drive away Vali and get his kingdom. Vibhishana wanted to put an end to Ravana and get Lanka. Dhruva wanted a kingdom where his step-mother would not trouble him and ill-treat him.

The jnani is a man of knowledge who has attained Self-illumination. Suka-Maharishi was a jnani-bhakta. He was a Brahma-jnani of the highest type. He realised that everything was his own Self. He taught the Srimad Bhagavatam to Parikshit.

There is another type of bhakta, called vaira bhakta. These bhaktas are negative bhaktas. They do not have positive devotion for God. They hate God and thus remember Him always. Hatred also requires a constant remembrance of the enemy. So these also are a kind of bhaktas only. They attain salvation through vaira bhakti.

Kamsa, Sisupala and others thought of the Lord constantly, on account of their deep hatred for Him. Thus they attained salvation.

Do Not Bargain With God

A real bhakta says, "I do not want anything from my beloved. Let my mind be ever fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord. Let my soul ever cling to Him." If a devotee once tastes the sweetness of divine love, what else can he desire but Him alone?

The boy Dhruva who went into the forest only to get domination by worshipping Hari, said when he had darshan of the Lord,

"I do not want a kingdom. I have my Beloved with me now.

All my desires are gratified now after I had darshan of Hari. My mind no longer craves for earthly possessions."

Prahlada was a true devotee. When Lord Hari told Prahlada,

"My dear Prahlada, I am pleased with your sincere devotion. Ask for any boon you like. I will grant you this very second." Prahlada replied, "My Lord! Tempt me not by offering boons. I have sought shelter in Thee in order to annihilate all desires, to have pure love for Thee, to have love for the sake of love only. He is not a genuine devotee who only worships the Lord with some ulterior motive in view."

Give up shop-keeping, trading or bargaining or doing commercial business with God. He who asks for a boon or anything from the Lord, save pure divine love for Him, is not a real devotee.

He becomes a trader in love, in religion. A college student bargains examination his year. I shall ole saMale im pass in my Can you call this pure divine love? It is pure mercenary business. Do not convert a sacred temple into a bazaar. He who bargains with God for little earthly things or some mundane possessions is a downright hypocrite. He is not a true servant or devotee of God.

Classifications

Five Thorns in the Path of Bhakti: The five thorns that are found in the path of bhakti are pride of caste, learning, position, beauty and youth. These thorns should be removed completely if one wants to have God-consciousness.
Eight Signs of Bhakti: Tears, horripilation, twisting of muscles, crying, laughing, sweating, fainting and inability to speak are the signs noticed when a bhakta develops bhakti to a higher degree.
Five Internal Enemies: The five internal enemies that stand in the way of developing bhakti are lust, anger, greed, infatuated love and hatred. These should be destroyed by celibacy, forgiveness, disinterestedness, enquiry, pure love and service.
Five External Enemies: The five external enemies dr onakti are cinema, bad company, obscene songs, rich spicy food and novels that deal with sex and passion. These five items should be shunned ruthlessly if you want to grow in devotion.
Four Grades of Bhakti: The four grades of bhakti are tender emotion, warm affection, glowing love and burning passion; or admiration for God, attraction, attachment and supreme love.
Four Classes of Love: The four classes of love are friendship for inferiors like children, love for equals like wife or friends, faith in superiors such as teachers or parents, and bhakti for God.
Characteristics of a Bhakta: A devotee has equal vision for all and no enmity for anybody. He has exemplary character. He has no attachment for anybody, place or thing and has no idea of
'mineness'. He has a balanced state of mind in pain and pleasure, heat and cold, praise and censure. He regards money as pieces of stone. He has neither

anger nor lust and he regards all ladies as his own sister or mother. The name of Hari is always on his lips. He has always inner life; his mind is turned inwards and is withdrawn from objects. He is full of peace and joy.
"These blessed bhaktas sometimes weep in loving memory of God, sometimes they laugh, sometimes rejoice, sometimes they talk mysterious things that are transcendental, sometimes they dance in divine ecstasy that is simply indescribable, sometimes they sing melodiously His praises and glory, sometimes they imitate the actions of the Lord and sometimes they sit quietly and enjoy the highest bliss of the Self." (Srimad Bhagavatam)

BHAKTI CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS

Adversity
You will find in the writings of Shakespeare, "Sweet are the uses of adversity which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet on its head a precious jewel. " The best thing in this world is pain or adversity. During pain only, man remembers God. Pain is the eye-opener. The quest of God begins from pain. The starting point of philosophy is from pain. Had there not been pain in this world, man would never have attempted to get freedom (moksha). He would have been satisfied with mundane life only. In trying to get rid of pain, he comes across Truth or the abode of peace. He starts prayer, japa, charity, selfless service, study of religous books, etc. Bhaktas always pray to God, "O Lord! Give us sufferings always so that we shall ever remember Thee." Kunti Devi prayed to Lord Krishna,
"Let me always have adversity, so that my mind shall be ever fixed at Thy lotus feet."
Adversity develops power of endurance and will-force, fortitude and forbearance. It melts a stony heart and infuses devotion to God.
It is a divine blessing in disguise. Do not be afraid, therefore, when you are in adverse circumstances. Adversity has got its own virtues.
People have risen to power and position from adverse conditions of life. Adversity makes a man struggle hard. The late Sir T.

Muthuswami Iyer, chief Justice, High Court Madras, was in adverse circumstances. He used to study at night under a municipal Street lantern. Many Prime Ministers of England had risen from adverse conditions of life. All the prophets, saints, fakirs, bhaktas and yogis of yore had to struggle hard in adverse circumstances Sankaracharya, Jnana Deva, Rama Tirtha and Tuka Ram were al placed in adverse circumstances. They were all highly benefited by adversity. They would never have achieved greatness and gloriou spiritual heights had they been placed in luxurious conditions.

God puts his devotees to severe tests and rigorous trials before He gives His darshan. Tulsidas, Ramdas and Surdas were all put to tests of several sorts. If God tries His devotees, at the same time He bestows upon them immense inner strength, power of endurance and spiritual patience also. Prince Surendranath told me, "Swamij, I do not see any good in renunciation. All the sadhus, sannyasing and mahatmas also suffer from diseases." I replied, "Dear prince, you are young. You cannot understand their internal state. Sadhus are quite indifferent. They do not identify themselves with their bodies. They may even cry out, but the steady state of their wisdom, (jnana stitthi) is not broken. They are firm in their devotion to God.

They have no sufferings at all. Bystanders may foolishly imagine that they are undergoing sufferings, but their minds are fixed in God or Brahman. Their strong conviction is that there is no body - in the past, present or future — and that they are all-pervading Atman or pure consciousness. Swami Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had cancer of the throat. He never felt any pain, as his mind was always fixed on Mother Kali. He had no time to think of his body even. A renunciate, sadhu or sannyasi has his inner peace, delight and divine bliss quite unknown to the worldly man. Even if you offer them kingdom, riches, etc. they will shun them ruthlessly. Riches have no value before their eyes. They know their worthless nature. My dear prince, you have really no idea of the happy life of a sannyasi. You are still worldly-minded, though there is a slight trace of bhakti in your heart."

Prince Surendranath said "Swamiji, thank you very much. l now understand your point well. The matter is quite clear now. I am really sorry. I had a wrong notion."

"Just hear, Prince Surendranath, this anecdote of two devotees: Rup and Sanatan, though enjoying regal powers, left their royal states at the bidding of Lord Gouranga and passed the rest of their days under trees, relying on food that came to them unsought. They had all the sufferings which people would consider unbearabli yet they were, according to their own testimony, far happier when they were under trees than when they could sleep in palaces. The bhakta has his celestial joys unknown to the men of the world." Surendranath said, "Swamiji, you have thrown a flood of light on the point. My doubts have vanished now. I am indeed grateful."

Anyone Can Become a Bhakta

There are no qualifications for a bhakta. Lord Rama extols Sabari's devotion. Though Sabari was not born of the highest caste, the brahmin community, she had intense devotion to the Lord. She tasted the fruit and then offered it to the Lord, because she wanted to give Him only the sweetest fruits. The Lord accepted it with great relish and blessed her. You need not offer costly jewels and dresses to the Lord. What He wants is the supreme love of your heart. He is pleased with a little offering of water, leaf or flower, given with intense love for Him.

The Lord is pleased with devotion alone; and no other condition is stipulated for bhakti yoga.

No distinction of caste or colour or sex finds a place in the realm of bhakti. The Sandilya Sutras say: "Even men and women of low castes have a right to devotion." Even the greatest sinner, a cut-throat of the darkest realms, can develop bhakti. There is no room for despair for any one. Lord Krishna says, "Even if the most sinful worships Me, with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous, for he has rightly resolved.

Speedily he becomes dutiful and goes to the eternal peace, O Kaunteya. Know thou for certain that My devotee never perishes. They who take refuge in me, O Partha, though of the womb of sinful women, vaishyas or sudras, also tread the highest path."

Even a pariah (of extreme low caste in the eyes of worldly-minded persons) can keep companionship with the Lord if he has devotion in his heart. Nandan

(a pariah) became a devoted saint and had darshan of Lord Nataraja, in Chidambaram (South India).
They even now perform his katha in Tamil districts.
Tiruvalluvar, the author of the reputed Tirukkural was also of inferior caste.
Dadu, the mystic, was a weaver. So also was Kabir.
Auvvayar, a virgin lady and a great devotee, was born in a low family. Guha-Nishad was also of a low caste. He had great devotion to Sri Rama. When Sri Rama was in exile, Guha-Nishad received Him with sincere love. Sri Rama freely accepted his hospitality. Guha-Nishad even moved with Sri Rama in terms of equality. Rai Das, a reputed bhakta, was a cobbler ously tasted a great devotee of Sri Rama. He even ate the fruits previously tasted by her. Sadhana a butcher, was a good devotee. Surdarij, a great lady devotee, once went with her father-in-law to Brindavan forests. She was in samadhi (communion with Lord Krishna). When a dacoit came to molest her Lord Krishna took the form of a tiger and devoured him. If one has real devotion to the Lord and constant remembrance, he will always be protected by Him. There is no doubt about this.
Cheer yourself up — never despair. Sin is a mistake committed by the ignorant jiva during his journey towards God. Once you make up your mind to tread the path of truth, all sins will be destroyed. Lord Krishna gives His word of promise: "Even if the most sinful worship Me, with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous, for he has rightly resolved. Speedily he becomes dutiful and goes to eternal peace. Know thou for certain that My devotee never perishes." The repetition of even ulta-nam (reverse name) of Rama mantra, transmuted rogue Ratnakar into Sage Valmiki. When such is the power of the reverse name (Mara, Mara), what to speak of the glory of repeating Rama, Rama with bhav from the bottom of the heart! Ajamila, who was in a degraded and abject state on account of his bad character, attained liberation by repeating 'Narayan' once on his deathbed when he called his son Narayan by his name. Licentious Vemanna of Andhra Desa became a full-blown yogi by his devotion to Mother Kali.
Grieve not, my dear friends. Fear not. Stand up. Gird up the loins. Fight with the senses and desires. Become a yogi. Forget the past. A glorious brilliant future is awaiting you. Cheer yourself up.

Purify. Concentrate. Do japa and kirtan. Meditate. Realise the sat-chit-ananda Atman.

God Becomes a Slave of Bhaktas

God tries his devotees in various ways in the beginning. He puts them to severe trials and tests. Eventually He becomes a slave of the bhaktas.

God is full of mercy, love and compassion. He has been described as the 'Ocean of Mercy'. His mercy flows like the streams of the Ganges and the Jumuna. He is depicted as having sold Himself, so to say, to His devotees. He willingly suffers endless pain in the eyes of the world in order to alleviate the suffering of His devotees. He bears, as an ornament, the scar left on His chest by the kick of Bhrighu. He ran with His chakra to kill the demon — who was in the form of a crocodile - when he heard the cry from Gajendra, the Lord of the elephants, and gave him salvation.

Here are two inspiring stories of recent incidents which illustrate the Lord's care of sincere devotees:

Roopkala Bhagavan was a famous bhakta in Ayodhya. It was he who started the all-India kirtan. He died a few years ago. He was a native of Chapra near Benares. He was an Inspector of Schools, and a sincere devotee of Sri Rama. One day he was absorbed in meditation, and thus did not visit a school for inspection. Lord Rama Himself assumed the form of the inspector through the power of His illusion, inspected the school boys, signed the register and disappeared. When the inspector came to the school next morning, the teachers said that he was present all along in the school the previous day and showed him his signature in the register. He was very much astonished. This gave him much encouragement. He instantaneously resigned his post, went to Ayodhya and spent the rest of his life in communion with Lord Rama.

In the Punjab a soldier, a sincere Rama bhakta, was on patrol duty at night. One night a fine kirtan party was moving about quite close to the soldier. The soldier was much moved by deep devotion, left his duty and joined the kirtan party. He enjoyed the kirtan to his heart's content. Overwhelmed with emotion, he entered into bhava samadhi, the ecstatic state of bhaktas. When

he returned at 6 a.m. he asked his subordinate what had happened. He replied, "Nothing happened. I saw you always on the patrol duty." The bhakta soldier was extremely surprised to hear this statement. He thought it was all the grace of Rama. Rama Himself assumed the form of the soldier and took charge of patrol duty to protect His devotee. When the bhakta realised this, he immediately resigned his post and went to Ayodhya to spend his whole life in devotion. My dear brothers, do not become sceptics. If you are sincere in your devotion you will have darshan of God face to face this very moment.

Lord Rama carried the palanquin of His devotee, late-reputed songster, bhakta Tyagaraja of Trivadi in Tanjore district (South India). He also carried water for his devotee's ablution.

While the dying bird Jatayu was in the lap of Sri Rama, He caressed the bird, which was mortally wounded in its heroic efforts to rescue Sita from the clutches of the demon king Ravana of Lanka. He wiped its body with His hair. Mark here the unique, tender care and the affection of Sri Rama towards His devotee.

When the boy Namadeva placed a dish of food before the deity of Pandharpur, Vitthoba (Lord Krishna) had to assume a human form immediately to eat it. Lord Krishna became the skilled charioteer of Arjuna in the battlefield. When he heard the pathetic cry of Draupadi, he hastened from Dvaraka and ran barefoot to supplement her sari.

When Mira was about to drown herself in the river, Sri Krishna stood before her and put her on His lap. Sri Krishna guided the blind Vilvamangal to Brindavan by holding the stick in His hand. When His barber bhakta was sick, He took upon Himself the duty of shampooing the Rajah; he massaged the feet of the Rajah during all the days of absence, of the barber. He conducted the marriage ceremony of the bhakta Narsi's daughter. He brought ghee for the funeral ceremonies of Narsi's father and patiently bore the rebukes of Narsi's wife.

Lord Krishna acted the part of a menial in carrying money to nawab to pay the debts of His bhakta, Damaji. He dug a well for His devotee in Pandharpur. Mark what kind of work the Lord Himself has done! Work is worship. Work is puja of Narayana.

There was a Vaishnava saint, called Nammalvar, near Tinnevelly in South India. He was very well known. He used to enter into samadhi under a tamarind tree. Madura Kavi was an aspirant. He saw a prominent light in the sky for three days consecutively. He was not able to understand this phenomenon on the first day. As it continued for three days, he began to think that God wanted to help him mysteriously. He directed his steps towards the south, from Madura to Tinnevelly. The light took him to Saint Nammalvar underneath the tamarind tree, where he was in samadhi at that time. Madura Kavi broke his samadhi by striking two pieces of stone. Nammalvar blessed Madura Kavi.

When Ekanath, the celebrated Maharashtrian saint, was in a depressed mood, he heard a celestial sound in the sky asking him to proceed to Swami Janardana. He followed the dictates of God, became a disciple of Swami Janardana and had darshan of Lord Krishna. This was another method by which the Lord had helped his devotee.

Saint Tukaram of Deo was instructed, or rather initiated, into the mysteries of the mantra 'Rama Krishna Hari' by Lord Krishna in his dream.

How merciful is the Lord. My hairs stand on end when I think of His merciful nature. I become silent and dumb. I really pity those agnostics and their dear friends the nihilists, atheists, materialists, socialists, etc. May God bestow good understanding and bliss on them!

Watch the mysterious ways of the Lord. Feel His presence everywhere in the blue sky, in the green verdure, in the rays of the sun, in the cry of the baby, in the sound of the nightingale, in the melodious pranava dhvani (OM sound) of the Ganges. Become merged in Him by constant meditation of His beautiful form!

BHAKTI SADHANA

Four things are indispensably requisite in the path of bhakti:

1. Bhakti should be without expectation.
2. The aspirant should love God and God alone.

3. The bhakti should be continuous like the flow of oil.
4. The aspirant should observe right conduct. He should be very serious and earnest in his devotional practices.
Then only will realisation of God come quickly.
God looks upon all with an equal eye. What He wants is your loving heart. He wants neither a big temple nor rich presents from you.
Bhakti can be acquired and cultivated. Constant satsang with devotees, repetition of His name (Sri Ram, Sita Ram, Hari Om, etc.), constant remembrance of the Lord, prayer, study of religious books such as Ramayana and Bhagavatam, chanting of His name, service of bhaktas, etc., can infuse bhakti into your heart.
Be up and doing, my dear friends, in spiritual sadhana, chanting, etc. Never waste a single minute. Wasting time is the highest sin.
Combine all the love you cherish towards all worldly objects - wife, husband, son, wealth, property, relatives and friends - and then apply this combined love towards God. You will realise in this very second.
Repeat the name of the Lord constantly. This will lead quite easily to control of mind. Do it with absolute faith and intense affection. Do it with love from the bottom of your heart. You must intensely feel the long painful separation from Him. Tears must flow profusely from your eyes.
Just as fire has the natural property of burning, the name of God has the power of burning sins, samskaras (tendencies) and vasanas (subtle desires) and bestowing eternal bliss and everlasting peace on those who repeat the name of the Lord. The power of destroying sins at their very root and branch and bringing the aspirant into blissful union with the Lord through bhava samadhi is natural and inherent in the name of God.
Live in Ayodhya, Brindavan, Pandhapur or Mathura for some months. Control the senses, eat simple food, wear simple clothing and lead a simple, natural life. You will develop bhakti soon.
Cultivate dispassion towards sensual objects; feel that the world is unreal and full of defects. Objects are unreal and perishable, and they are attended with various sorts of pains and miseries.
Dispassion will come by itself. Attachment for objects is an enemy of bhakti.

When you come across a beggar in rags, bow to him with folded hands as Ramakrishna Paramahamsa prostrated before an outcaste girl and Pavhari Baba prostrated before a thief and offered all he had. See all as Krishna. Become guileless and straightforward. Give up all ideas of duty and responsibility. Allow the divine will to work unhampered.
Repeat the formula: "I am thine. All is thine. Thy will be done." Have perfect self-surrender, then only will you have darshan of God Do not keep any desires for your private indulgence. Destroy egoism completely — this is the secret of surrender. A great transformation will come upon you. You will feel yourself a changed being. You will be enveloped by a halo of divine effulgence and be drowned in indescribable bliss, peace and joy. Your old little self will die. You will be a changed spiritual being.

Qualifications for Bhakti Sadhana

The qualifications for the attainment of bhakti are a pure loving hear, faith, innocence, simplicity, truthfulness, straightforward-ness, dispassion and continence.
A devotee of Krishna is always meek and humble. The name of God is always on his lips. He sheds profuse tears when he is alone and he is very pious. He has equal vision and is friendly towards all.
He never hurts the feelings of others. He has a spotless character and he never covets the property of others. He sees the Lord in all beings.
A devotee should become an embodiment of goodness. He must be ever ready to do good to all living beings. That devotee who is intent upon the welfare of all beings obtains the peace of the Eternal.
He who rejoices in the welfare of all gets the darshan of the Lord. He develops advaitic (non-dual) consciousness eventually.
Lord Krishna has given a description of bhaktas in the Bhagavatam: "They do not care for anything. Their hearts are fixed on Me.
They are without 'mine-ness'. They have no egoism. They make no distinction between sorrow and happiness. They do not take anything from others. They can bear heat, cold and pain. They have love for all living beings. They have no enemy. They are serious and possess exemplary character."

No man is absolutely bad. Remember that the Lord Himself is acting the part of a rogue, thief and a prostitute in the world's drama. This is His play (lila). Remember 'All this is God' and 'All this world is pervaded by Vishnu'. When you see a rogue, devotion will arise in your heart.

Practice of Sadhana

Here is a sadhana for advanced students. This is highly useful for getting quick, solid progress in the spiritual path. Get up at 4 a.m. Start your japa sitting in any asana you have mastered. Do not take any food or drink for 14 hours. Do not get up from the position.

Finish the japa at sunset. Take milk and fruits after sunset. Practice this once a week or once a fortnight. Householders can do it during holidays.

Here is another sadhana for ten days. You can do this during Christmas holidays or summer vacation. Shut yourself up in an airy room. Do not talk to anybody, do not see anybody and do not hear anything. Get up at 4 a.m. Start japa of the mantra of your ishta devata (chosen deity) or your guru mantra, and finish it at sunset. devana (chosen dei or fruits or kheer (milk and rice boiled win sugar). Take rest for one or two hours, but continue the japa. Then again start japa seriously. Retire to bed at 11 p.m. You can combine meditation along with the japa. Make all arrangements for bath, food, etc., inside the room. Have two rooms if you can manage, one for bath and one for meditation. Repeat this four times in a year.

This practice can be kept up even for 40 days. You will have wonderful results and various experiences. You will enter into samadhi. You will have darshan of the form of God that you are devoted to. I assure you.

*Spiritual Diary

Keep a spiritual diary. Note down in the diary when you become angry towards others and when you hurt the feelings of others. This is very very important. If you exhibit anger or hurt others, impose self-punishment on yourself. Give up meals at night.

Do 50 malas of japa more. Write in the diary: "I have forgotten to see God in man two times this day." If you proceed in this way for one or two years you will doubtless realise remarkable peace, wonderful spiritual progress and strong will-power. Many kinds of miseries, troubles and mental torments will come to an end.

Devotion will develop. You will evolve rapidly. You will be a changed man, a veritable God on earth.

Turn over the pages of the diary once a week. If you commit twenty mistakes daily now, you will commit five only in a day after six months, if you keep a diary. A good time will come when you will not commit even a single mistake in a day. Benjamin Franklin kept this kind of diary.

THE POWER OF THE NAME OF GOD

Sound and Image

Sounds are vibrations. They give rise to definite forms. Each sound produces a form in the invisible world, and combinations of sound create complicated shapes. The textbooks of science describe certain experiments which show that notes produced by certain instruments trace out, on a bed of sand, definite geometrical figures.

It is thus demonstrated that rhythmical vibrations give rise to regular geometrical figures. The Hindu books on music tell us that the various musical tunes, 'ragas' and 'raginis' have each a particular shape, which these books graphically describe. For instance, the megha-raga is said to be a majestic figure seated on an elephant. The vasanta-raga is described as a beautiful youth decked with flowers.

All this means that a particular raga or ragini, when accurately sung, produces aerial etheric vibrations which create the particular shape, said to be the characteristic of it. This view has recently received corroborations from the experiments carried out by Mrs. Watts Hughes, the gifted author of 'Voice Figure'. She delivered an illustrated lecture before a select audience in Lord

Leighton's studio to demonstrate the beautiful scientific discoveries on which she has alighted as the result of many years' patient labour. Mrs. Hughes sings into a simple instrument called an eidophone, which consists ol a tube, a receiver and a flexible membrane, and she finds that each note assumes a definite and constant shape, as revealed through a sensitive and mobile medium.

At the outset of her lecture she placed tiny seeds upon the flexible membrane and the air-vibrations set up by the notes she sounded danced them into definite geometric patterns. Afterwards she used dusts of various kinds. A reporter describing the shape of the notes speaks of
as remarkable revelations of geometry,
perspective and shading - "Stars, spirals, snakes and imaginations rioting in a wealth of captivating methodical design." Once when Mrs. Hughes was singing a note, a daisy appeared and disappeared and, "I tried," she said, "to sing it back for weeks, before at last I succeeded." Now she knows the precise inflections of the particular note that is a daisy, and it is made constant and definite by a strange method of coaxing an alternation of crescendo and diminuendo.

After the audience had gazed enraptured at a series of daisies, some with succeeding rows of petals, delicately viewed, they were shown other notes and these were daisies of great beauty. "How wonderful!
How lovely!" were the audible exclamations that arose as exquisite form succeeded exquisite form on the screen. The flowers were followed by sea-monsters, full of light and shade and detail. After these notes there came forms of trees - trees with fruits falling, trees with a foreground of rocks, trees with sea behind. The people in the audience thought that they were just like Japanese landscapes.

While in France, Madam Finlang's singing of a hymn to Virgin Mary — "Ave Maria" — brought out the form of Mary with child Jesus on her lap, and again the singing of a hymn to 'Bhairava' by a Bengali student of Varanasi, studying in France, gave rise to the formation of the figure of Bhairava with his vehicle, the dog.

Thus, repeated singing of the name of the Lord builds up gradually the form of the special manifestation of the deity whom you seek to worship, and this acts

as a focus to concentrate the benign influence of the divine Being, which, radiating from the centre, penetrates the worshipper.

When one enters the state of meditation, the flow of the inner vritti (thought wave) is greatly intensified. The deeper one goes into meditation the more marked is the effect. The concentration of the mind upwards sends a rush of this force through the top of the head, and the response comes in a fine rain of soft magnetism. The feeling arising from the downward shower sends a wonderful glow through the body, and one feels as if he is bathed in a soft kind of electricity.

The above experiments demonstrate the following facts:

1.sounds produce shapes.

2. Particular notes give rise to particular forms.

3. If you want to generate a particular form, you must produce a definite note in a particular pitch.

The repetition of the panchakshara mantra, "Om namah Sivaya," produces the form of Lord Siva. The repetition of "Om namo Narayanaya,
" the ashtakshara mantra of Vishnu, produces
the form of Vishnu. In a mantra, the vibrations to be produced by the notes are all important. Much emphasis is laid on the pitch as well as form (varna) of a mantra. (Varna literally means colour.) In the invisible world all sounds are accompanied by colours, so that they give rise to many-hued shapes. In the same way colours are accompanied by sounds. A particular note has to be used to produce a particular form. Different notes in different pitches give rise to different shapes. In the science of mantra we use different mantras for the purpose of invoking different gods. If you worship Lord Siva you use "Om namah Sivaya," but in worshipping Vishnu or Shakti you will have to change the mantra.

Harmonious, rhythmical notes produce a distinctive image. It is not an imagination. For every sound there is a particular image. It has been scientifically proved that a certain particular sound produces a certain particulr figure over some distinct surface. So, it is reasonably believed that the respective names of God associated with their respective forms can also produce their images on the mental surface. Continuous repetition forms a

deep-rooted impression in the mind of the repeater, who ultimately attains God-vision.

Power of Sound and Name

Sound exists in four fundamental states, viz., (1) vaikhari or dense, audible sound, sound in its maximum differentiation; (2) madhyama or an inner, subtle, more ethereal state at which it is inaudible to the physical ear; (3) pashyanti or a still higher, inner, more ethereal state; (4) para, which represents Ishvara-shakti and is the potential state of the sound which is undifferentiated. The para sound is not, like the vaikhari, different in different languages. It is the unchanging primal substratum of them all, the source of the universe.

The power of sounds is tremendous. Ideas are generated in the mind by the mere hearing of sounds. Every name has a form corresponding to it. Sound and object are inseparable. The form related to a name is at once manifested in the mind the moment that name is heard by the ears and transmitted to the mental consciousness. There are names denoting forms which are abhorred and there are also names denoting forms which are much desired.

Pains and pleasures become the experiences in the mind when it is aware of hateful and delightful objects, respectively, through hearing of them. When anyone suddenly shouts: "Scorpion! Scorpion!" or
"Snake!" you at once apprehend the scorpion or the snake and jump in fright. When anyone calls you 'Donkey' or 'Ass' you are annoyed and you show anger. Why do you do this? Because there is created in your mind the consciousness of your supposed contact or identity with something which you think is very dangerous or far inferior to you. So you get terrified or feel that you are depreciated. That is why you jump in fear when you hear of the presence of a scorpion or a snake near you, and do not tolerate your being addressed as a donkey or an ass. Through anger you wish to show that you are not a donkey. When such is the power of the name of an ordinary thing of this world, what a tremendous power there must be in the name of God!

God is the completion or the fullness of existence. Hence, the name which denotes Him is also full and perfect. Therefore the power of the name of God is

incalculable, for it is the height or the zenith of power. The name of God can achieve anything, there is nothing impossible for it. It is the means to the realization of God Himself.

Even as the name of a thing in this world generates the consciousness of that thing in the mind, the name of God generates God-consciousness in the purified mind and becomes the direct cause of the realization of the highest perfection, i.e., God, freedom and immortality

There is an inscrutable shakti and mysterious power in God's name. All the divine potencies are hidden in it. It is a mysterious ineffable, divine injection. God is the one doctor for all sicknesses. Rely on Him alone. The names of God are the most potent unfailing tonics, sure panaceas, wel-tried elixirs and sovereign specifics. You can take this medicine of repetition of the name of God yourself for curing any disease. You can administer this marvellous medicine to other patients also in your house and elsewhere. Sit by the side of the patien and repea with sincere devotion and faith the name of the Lord, such as Har Om, Sri Ram and Om Namah Sivaya, and sing his name also Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare. Pray for His mercy and grace. All maladies and agonies will come to an end. Do the gratment of nama japa for at least two hours in the morning and evening. You will find the miraculous effect within a short time Both doctor and patient should have perfect faith in the Lord', name, His mercy and grace.

Lord Dhanvantari, who expounded the science of Ayurveda. has himself declared: "By the medicine of the repetition of Achyuta Ananda, Govinda, all diseases are cured. This is my definite and honest declaration." In all treatments Lord Narayana is the real doctor. You find that even the world's best doctors fail to cure a dying king. You might have also heard of many instances where patients ailing from the worst type of diseases are cured miraculously where even the ablest doctors have declared the case hopeless. This itself is clear proof that there is the divine Hand behind all cures.

The name of God will bestow on you moksha, liberation or immortality. Those who do not believe in this may do it for the sake of examination or test and then do as they like or think proper. It is not at all wise to while away the time merely in arguments or vain discussions. Life is short, time is fleeting, the

body is continually decaying. There is nothing but gain, and gain only, in doing japa.
A devotee should not test the Lord by the chanting of His name.
For example one should not use the name as an excuse for the deliberate perpetration of evil acts. Yes, the name can overcome the effects of even such acts; but the implications of such acts would be that the devotee who uses the name thus has not got genuine aspiration and devotion to the Lord, and his mind is still being attracted to things other than those that pertain to the Lord and to His way. Hence the condition for chanting the Divine name is well laid out.

"He who is humbler than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, who does not crave for respect, but respects others, is the one fit to take the name of Hari."

The Divine Name

A name denotes a particular concept; it is a verbal embodiment of a concept. Whatever the object of conception may be - either general or particular, either gross or subtle, visionary or real — the name is essentially associated with it. It gives a clear, adequate expression to a particular form or object that is associated with it, so as to enable us to comprehend and distinctly retain it in our mind.
The name of God is a verbal embodiment of the concept of the Supreme Being. The Supreme is infinite, but as it is not always possible for the common man to conceive of what is beyond the perception of the finite mind, the Infinite Truth is symbolised as forms that vary according to their respective tendencies or mode of perception. Though in the initial stage there is difference and distinction among various names and their associated objects, when a habit of repetition of the name is formed and the divine consciousness is kept ever awake, there ultimately remains no distinction between the name and the associated idea or object. The intuitive knowledge of the Supreme is revealed in the name itself, for the basis of all names and forms is the one primal Being who manifests Himself under different names and forms, as per

the faiths and tendencies of the different sects and races at different times and places.
In ordinary self-consciousness there is the duality of the repeater and the name. Ultimately the ordinary self-consciousness elevates into a transcendental experience, a state of super-consciousness. The repeater and the name become one. The eternal Truth is revealed to him. He realises his oneness with the Supreme. The sense of duality - the gulf of separateness between the infinite and finite - is removed. The dawn of intuition leads him from finitude to infinitude, from darkness to light, from mortality to immortality.
He experiences only his delight in the divine, and is not conscious of anything other than God. His all-absorbing love for God pierces through the names and forms of the universe: the universe to him is only God. He feels the same intensity of love for animate and inanimate objects of the world.
The glory of the divine name cannot be established through reasoning or arguments. It can be experienced only through faith and belief.

Glory of the Name

There is an unfathomable depth, intense sweetness and charm in the Lord's name. What a lot of joy its repetition brings! What a lot of power it infuses into man! It destroys old sins, desires, imaginations, whims, fancies, depressing moods, sex-impulses and various innate tendencies and exalts a man to the status of divinity.
It brings you face to face with the Lord and makes you realise your oneness with Him (para bhakti or supreme love)
The Lord's name is all-bliss. When it is chanted the mind merges in its bliss, it loses its individual entity in the bliss: it becomes one with the bliss itself. It is beyond the futile explanation of the limited intellect. It is a thing knowable only through experience.
God and His name are identical; they are inseparable. He dwells where His name is sung. The whole atmosphere becomes sanctified. Peace, purity and bliss prevail there. His name carries the message of love, and it frees the soul from affliction, unrest and bondage. His name knows no barrier or distinction.

It purifies the vicious lower self and elevates it to the sublimity of universal consciousness and transcendent God-head. Chanted correctly or incorrectly, knowingly or unknowingly, carefully or carelessly, it is sure to give the desired result. The glory of the name of God cannot be established through reasoning and intellect. It can certainly be experienced or realised only through devotion, faith and constant repetition. Every name is filled with countless potencies or shaktis.

Have faith in the saving grace of God and the power of His name. Its repetition liberates you from the trammels of earthly life, renders you pure and restores freedom of spirit.

In the darkest hour of your trial only God's name will save you.

It was the utterance of the name of God alone that caused the salvation of a great sinner like Ajamila. Ajamila was a righteous brahmin in the beginning, but he fell in love with a low-caste girl and committed many atrocious crimes. It was at the time of death that he uttered the name of his son "Narayana' and there came the messengers of Narayana Himself to his rescue, and he (Ajamila) was released from this world forever.

Though the house in which they lived was burnt, the Pandavas were not burnt to death, because of their immense faith in the name of Hari; the Gopalakas were not harmed by fire when the wild fire broke out, because of their immense faith in the Lord's name;

Hanuman was not burnt, though his tail was set fire to by the Rakshasas, on account of his immense faith in Rama's name;

Prahlada was not burnt by fire because he had taken refuge in the name of Hari; Sita was not harmed by the fire when she had to undergo the 'fire' trial for testing her chastity, because she had Rama's name as her sole refuge; the palace of Vibhishana was not burnt when the whole of Lanka was burnt to ashes, because of his immense faith in the name of Sri Rama. Such is the glory of the Lord's name.

The prostitute Pingala was mysteriously transformed into a saintly lady by the power of repeating the name of Sri Rama (learnt through her guru the parrot, which she obtained as a lovely present from a thief) and she easily obtained salvation. The parrot was trained to utter the name 'Sri Rama, Sri Rama'.

Pingala knew nothing of Rama-nama. She heard the sound Rama-Rama through the mouth of the parrot. It was very melodious and charming. Pingala was very much attracted. She fixed her mind on the sound and mysteriously entered into bhava-samadhi (union with Rama).

Such is the power of the name of the Lord. It is a pity that the present day people who have studied science have no faith in repetition of the Lord's name. It is highly deplorable.

When one sings the Lord's name he is unconsciously raised to sublime spiritual heights. The music first thrills the nerves, harmonises them and then mysteriously acts upon the mind. The devotee loses body-consciousness, he is immersed in joy and drinks deep the divine nectar of immortality. He gets divine intoxication.

Repetition of God's name enables the devotee to feel the divine Presence, the divine Glory and the divine Consciousness within himself and also everywhere.

How sweet, how powerful is God's name. What an amount of joy and peace and strength it brings to one who repeats it. Sing the Lord's name. Take refuge in the name. Sing it incessantly. Repeat it with every incoming and outgoing breath. Dance in ecstacy. Be regular in your sadhana. Realise the Self in this very birth. Japa is the easiest, quickest, safest and surest way to reach God and attain immortality and perennial joy.

Mantra Yoga

Mantra Yoga is an exact science.

Mananat trayate iti mantrah

That is mantra by the manana (constant thinking or recollection) of which, one is redeemed.'

A mantra is so-called because it is achieved by the mental process. The root 'man' in the word mantra comes from the first syllable of 'mananat", (meaning 'to think') and 'tra' from trai (meaning 'to protect' or 'free' from the bondage

of samsara or the phenomenal world). By the combination of 'man' and 'tra' comes mantra.
A mantra is divinity. It is divine power or shakti manifesting in a sound-body. The aspirant should try his level best to realise his unity with the mantra of the divinity; and to the extent he does so, the mantra-power (mantra shakti) supplements his worship-power (sadhana shakti) and reinforces it when it becomes imperfect and meets with obstacles. Just as a flame is strengthened by wind, so also the aspirant's individual shakti is strengthened by mantra-shakti.
The mantra is a mass of radiant tejas (energy). Mantra awakens supernatural powers. It accelerates and generates creative force. The repetition of the mantra produces harmony.
Every mantra has the following six parts:

1. It has a rishi who had Self realisation for the first time through this mantra and who gave it to others. He is the seer for this mantra (e.g. Sage Visvamitra is the rishi for gayatri).
2. It has a metre also.
3. There is a particular presiding deity of the mantra.
4. It has a bija or seed. (This gives a special power to the mantra. This is the essence of the mantra.)
5. Every mantra has a shakti.
6. It has a kilaka (pillar or pin). This plugs the dormant potency (chaitanya) that is hidden in the mantra. As soon as the plug is removed by constant and prolonged repetition, the potency that is hidden is revealed. The devotee gets darshan of the Ishta devata.

In spiritual life the whole being must be in perfect ease and in tune with the divine, then only the spiritual truth can be realised.
The mantra has the power of releasing the cosmic and the supra-cosmic consciousness.
It transfoms the mental substance by
producing

a particular thought-movement. The rhythmical vibrations produced by its utterance regulate the unsteady vibrations of the five sheaths. It checks the natural tendencies of the mind to run after objects, and awakens super-human powers (siddhis) when the sleeping consciousness in a mantra (the mantra chaitanya) is awakened.

Chronic diseases can be cured by mantras. Chanting of mantras generates potent spiritual waves of divine vibrations which penetrate the physical and astral bodies and remove the root causes of suffering. It fills the cells with pure sattva or divine energy, destroys microbes and vivifies the cells and tissues. Mantras are the best, most potent antiseptics and germicides. They are more potent than ultra-violet rays.

When you repeat any mantra, do it remembering its meaning. Rama, Siva, Krishna all mean sat-chit-ananda, (existence,
knowledge, bliss absolute), purity, perfection, all light, eternity, immortality.

The repetition of the mantra should be done with deep feeling.

A tremendous effect is produced when the name chanted is attended with a consciousness of the relation of the chanter to the Deity of the name, but it is potent enough to cause a change in the psychological and the physical being of man even when it is mechanically repeated.

A mantra is formed by significant letters, which by the very fact of their being uttered, produce a result — even if the result may not be directly connected with the consciousness of the chanter of the mantra. There is a very peculiar process of physical and psychic transformation taking place at the time when the mantra is repeated.

Unconscious and mechanical repetition produces no direct psychic change, but causes biological changes through the nervous system which is immediately influenced by the vibrations set up by the chanting of the mantra. These biological changes indirectly bring about psychological changes, for these two natures in man are related to each other as effect and cause, respectively; and the effects are so intimately related to their causes that any change in the effect will be felt by the causes, and vice versa. However, the japa of a mantra can bring the practitioner realisation of his highest goal even if he has no knowledge of the meaning of the mantra, only it will take a little more time.

The repetition of the mantra removes the dirt of the mind such as lust, anger, greed, etc. Just as the mirror acquires the power of reflection when the dirt covering it is removed, even so the mind from which the impurities have been removed acquires the capacity to reflect the higher spiritual Truth. Just as soap cleanses the cloth of its impurities, so also the mantra is a spiritual soap cleansing the mind. Even a little recitation of a mantra with faith, feeling and concentration on its meaning with one-pointed mind, destroys all impurities of the mind. You should utter the name of God or any mantra regularly every day. The recital of a mantra destroys your sins and brings everlasting peace, infinite bliss, prosperity and immortality. There is not the least doubt about this.

The Glory of Mantra Diksha

Mantra diksha, initiation into the divine name, is one of the holiest and most significant of the sacred rituals in spiritual life. To receive the guru-mantra from a realised saint is the rarest of good fortune and the most precious of the divine blessings that may be bestowed upon the aspirant. The full glory of mantra-diksha can hardly be imagined by the uninitiated.

The process of mantra-diksha is most ancient, and is a vital symbol of supreme Divinity, directly revealed to the sages of Self-realisation in the time of the Vedas and Upanishads. Mantras have been carefully handed down to us down the centuries, generation after generation, by the long succession of saints, through the system of guru-parampara.

The mantra is an unfailing key which gives access to the direct experience of the highest Reality. A tremendous transformation begins to take place in the innermost core of he who receives the mantra. He is himself unaware of this fact because of the veil of ignorance that still covers him, even as a poor man who is sleeping soundly in his humble cottage at night, when carried silently and deposited upon a royal couch in the Emperor's palace remains completely unaware of his transfer because he is still in deep sleep. But, nevertheless, this transformation starts with initiation, and like a seed that is sown in the earth, ultimately culminates in the grand fruit of realisation or Atma-jnana. Even as the seed has to pass through a process of developing into a seedling, a plant, a

sapling and then a full-grown tree, the seeker must make earnest and continuous effort in the form of spiritual sadhana, if the initiation is to become fruitful. This is the seeker's sole responsibility, but he will doubtless receive the help, guidance and grace of the guru, if he has firm faith and loyalty to him. The seeker eagerly and devoutly awaits mantra-initiation from the guru, receives the sacred mantra from him on this rare auspicious occasion, cherishes it and nurtures it in himself, and by his effort or process of sadhana transforms it into a tremendous spiritual power which breaks the fort of ignorance and opens the door to the blissful immortal experience.

The process of initiation links you directly with the Divine Being. Initiation is at one end of this golden chain, and the Lord or the highest transcendental experience of the Atman is at the other end of it.

Initiation puts you in possession of the direct means of attaining the grandest and the highest thing which can be attained, attaining which you obtain everything, knowing which you know everything and gaining which nothing more remains to be gained. It leads you to the full knowledge and experience that you are neither the mind nor the body, that you are satchidananda Atman, full of light and full of the highest bliss. Such is the glory of mantra-diksha.

Meaning of Mantras

What happens when a mantra is recited? The repeated recitation of the mantra produces in the mind the form of the devata or the deity connected with the mantra, which is your Ishta, and this form becomes the centre of your consciousness when you directly realise it. It is therefore said that the mantra of the deva is the deva himself. This may explain the much misunderstood dictum of the Mimamsa philosophers that the gods do not exist apart from the mantras. This really means that when a particular mantra appropriated to a particular god is properly recited, the vibrations so set up create in the higher planes a special form which that god ensouls for the time being. By constant repetition of the mantra the seeker imbibes the virtues and powers of the deity that presides over the mantra. For instance, the repetition of the surya mantra relating to the sun-god bestows health, long life, vigour, vitality and

brilliance. It removes all diseases of the body and the diseases of the eye. No enemy can do any harm. Repetition of 'aditya-hridaya' in the early morning is highly beneficial. Lord Rama conquered Ravana through the repetition of 'aditya-hridaya' imparted by Agastya-rishi.

Repetition of Sarasvati-mantra 'Om Sri Sarasvatyai namah' will bestow wisdom and intelligence on you, and make you a learned person. You will get inspiration and compose poems. You will become a great scholar. Repetition of 'Om Sri Mahalakshmyal namah' will confer wealth on you and remove poverty. Ganesha-mantra will remove any obstacle in any undertaking. It bestows wisdom on you, as also siddhis, wealth, etc. Maha-mrityunjaya mantra will remove accidents, incurable diseases and calamities and bestow long life and immortality. It is a moksha-mantra, too. Those who do japa of this mantra daily will enjoy good health and long life, and attain moksha in the end. ["We bow to that three-eyed Lord (Siva),
who is full of sweet tragrance, who nourishes the human beings (always). May He free me from the bondage of samsara and death, just as a ripe cucumber fruit is separated from the stalk, and may I be fixed in immortality." This is the meaning of the maha-mrityunjaya mantra.]

Repetition of Subrahmanya-mantra 'Om Sri Saravanabhavaya namah' will give you success in any undertaking and make you glorious. It will drive off evil influences and evil spirits. Repetition of Sri Hanuman-mantra, 'Om Sri Hanumante namah' will bestow victory and strength. Repetition of 'panchadashakshara' and 'shodashakshara' (Sri-vidya) will give you wealth, power, freedom, etc. It will give you whatever you want. You must learn this vidya only from a guru.

Repetition of gayatri or pranava or Om namah Sivaya, Om namo Narayananaya, or Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya one and a quarter lakh times, with intense feeling, faith and devotion, will confer mantra-siddhi on you.

Om, Soham, Sivoham and Aham Brahmasmi are moksha-mantras. They will help you to attain Self-realisation. Om Sri Ramaya namah, Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya are saguna-mantras which will enable you to attain saguna-realisation first, and then nirguna-realisation in the end.

Mantra Siddhi

Mantra siddhi for curing scorpion-stings, cobra-bites, etc., can be attained within 40 days. Repeat the mantra with faith and devotion regularly. Have a sitting in the early morning after taking bath. Observe celibacy and live on milk and fruits for 40 days or take restricted diet. These mantras should be repeated on days of eclipse for getting mantra-siddhi quickly. You should stand in water and repeat the mantra. This is more powerful and effective. This can be recited on ordinary days also for attaining mantra-siddhi.

He who has attained mantra-siddhi can cure cobra-bite or scorpion-stings or any chronic disease by mere touch on the affected part. When a man is bitten by a cobra, a telegram is sent to the mantra-siddha who recites the mantra, and the man who was bitten by the cobra is cured. What a grand marvel! Does this not prove the tremendous power of mantra?

Mantra-siddhi should not be misused for the destruction of others. Those who misuse the mantra-power for destroying others are themselves destroyed in the end.

Selection of Ishta Devata

You can select your Ishta-devata - Siva, Krishna, Rama, Vishnu, Dattatreya, Gayatri, Durga or Kali — according to your own inclination or on consultation with a good astrologer who will select the deity according to the nature of your planet and sign of the zodiac. Every one of us has done worship of some Devata in our previous births. The samskaras are in the sub-conscious mind. So naturally, everyone of us has an inclination towards a particular Devata. If you had worshipped Lord Krishna in your previous birth, naturally you will have an inclination to Lord Krishna in this birth also.

When you are in great agony and distress you will naturally utter a certain name of God. This will give you the clue to find out your Ishta-devata. If a scorpion has stung you severely, you may utter 'He Rama', another may utter 'He Krishna', while a third may utter 'He Narayana' and a fourth may utter 'He Siva' The calling of a particular name is due to samskara of a previous birth. If

you had worshipped Rama in the previous birth, naturally you will utter 'He Rama' when you are stung by a scorpion, and so on.
While you are doing the japa of any mantra, think that you are really praying to your Ishta-devata, that your Ishta-devata is really listening to you, that He is looking at you with merciful eyes and that with open hands He is giving you freedom from fear with a view to give you liberation (moksha). Entertain this feeling.
If you are not able to form the image of your Ishta-devata and fix your mind on it, you may try to hear the sound of the mantra as you mentally repeat it, or to think of the letters of the mantra in order. This will stop the mind wandering.

The Secret of Ramayana

The Valmiki Ramayana is the standard history of Sri Rama. It is a majestic epic expounding dharma (righteousness) by way of depicting the great heroic life of the ideal person, Sri Rama. greatness of the Valmiki Ramayana cannot be adequately described.
It is a huge didactic poem which has its main aim in constraining people to follow the path of righteousness, and towards this end it employs the popular technique of appealing to the hearts of people by narrating in a homely style the story of a life devoted to rightousness. The picturesque life of Sri Rama described by Valmiki is a grand glorification of the greatness of Sri Ram, hence the Ramayana is in a way an expanded form of the name and glory of Sri Rama. A study of the Ramayana is a contemplation on the various divine qualities of Sri Rama which purifies the mind of man and renders it spiritual.
The secret of the Ramayana is the attainment of liberation through control of mind. Killing the ten-headed monster, Ravana of Lanka, is the annihilation of the ten modifications of the mind: viz. infatuation, hatred, lust, anger, miserliness, delusion, pride, egoism, jealousy and ostentation or vanity. Sita represents mind; Rama represents Brahman; Sita unites with her husband Rama. Mind merges in Brahman by concentration and incessant meditation on Rama. This is the esoteric teaching of the Ramayana.
Constant repetition of the two-lettered mantra Rama (Ra and Ma) with purity of feeling and perfect concentration, leads to the control of mind, and samadhi.

The thinker and the thought, the meditator and the meditated, the worshipper and the worshipped, become blended into one. Mind is filled with Rama. As you think, so you become. The mind becomes identical with Rama. The jiva's will becomes merged with the cosmic will.

Power of Rama Nama

The recitation of Rama nama is a blessing which millions have treasured in their hearts since ages past. It is the supreme purifier of the mind of man, the bestower of perennial joy, the giver of peace and the key to the door of immortality. He who recites Sri Rama's name can never come to grief. Lord Rama is the bestower of blessedness. He has the power to liberate people from the unceasing round of births and deaths. He who repeats Rama nama, pouring Out tears of love, attains life eternal. The name 'Rama' will guide him in the path.

When Rama nama is chanted, a significant change takes place in the entire organism of the person chanting it. There is a two-fold effect produced by the utterance of the divine name. The mantra-shakti or the power generated sets the whole nervous system of the Person in vibration, a vibration which brings about rhythm, harmony and equilibrium in it. When the system is in such a harmonised state, the breath, too, flows rhythmically and the mind rests in a state of tranquillity. It is in this peaceful state of the mind that the divine consciousness is reflected and the joy of the Eternal is experienced. Secondly the idea of the divine Being generated in the mind at the time of the repetition of the name gives a direct fillip to the mind in its attempt to unite itself with the divine Being. The divine name is not merely a sound; it is a force which can overcome all the distractive forces in the human system and render it pure, and make it fit for the experience of sattva, the highly transparent medium through which the immortal Being is reflected.

The two-lettered Rama mantra is the best of all the mantras, because it is a combination of the two most important mantras, panchakshara and ashtakshara. Ra is taken from Om namo
Narayanaya
and Ma from Om namah Sivaya.

The
Ramarahasyopanishad says that when these letters are removed from these two mantras they not only lose their primary meaning but give the opposite meaning. Therefore, Rama mantra is very powerful. The shorter the mantra, the greater the concentration. So repetition of Rama mantra brings about greater amount of concentration.

By worship and meditation or japa of Rama mantra, the mind is actually shaped into the form of Rama. By continual practice the mind becomes full of the object (Rama) to the exclusion of everything else, and steady in purity it does not stray into impurity.

So long as mind exists it must have an object to lean upon and the object of sadhana is to present the mind with a pure object.

By uttering the name in its opposite form (ulta-nama) by saying Mara-Mara instead of Rama-Rama, the great saint Valmiki became Brahman Himself. When such is the effect of ulta-nama, then who can speak of the glory of the right and proper name?

The well-known poet, Goswami Tulsidas, said: "The worship of the name of the Rama never goes in vain, just as the practice of swimming in one's boyhood is of great help at some future time.

He says that whether you remember Rama in your pleasant mood or unpleasant mood, it is sure to give its good effect, just as the seeds in the field thrown either rightly or wrongly give good results.

Mahatma Gandhi said: "You must learn to take the name of Rama with full devotion and faith. When you study the Ramayana you will learn from Tulsidas the divine power of that blessed name.

"You might ask me why I tell you to use the word Rama and not one of the many other names of the Creator. True, His names are as many as and more than the leaves on the tree yonder, and I might for instance ask you to use the word 'God'. But what meaning, what associations would it have for you here? In order to enable you to feel anything when repeating the word 'God', I should have to teach you some English. I should have to explain to you the foreign people's thoughts and associations.

"But in telling you to repeat the name Rama, I am giving you a name worshipped since the beginning of time by the people of this land, a name

familiar to the very animals and birds, the very stones of Hindustan through so many thousands of years. You all know the story of Ahalya? No, I see you don't. But you will soon learn it when you study the Ramayana. You will learn how a stone by the roadside sprang to life at the touch of Rama's foot as He passed by. You must learn to repeat the blessed name of Rama with sweetness and such devotion that the birds and beasts will pause for a moment to listen to you; the very trees will bend their leaves towards you, stirred by the divine melody of that name. And when you are able to do this I tell you I will come all the way on foot from Bombay as on a pilgrimage to hear you. In His sweet name lies a power which can cure all our ills."

Rama nama is also unfailing in its action, infallible in its operations. Properly understood, it is the same as OMkara, the symbol of the absolute Brahman; and Rama, to the true devotee, is not merely the son of Dasaratha or the king of Ayodhya, but the Absolute Itself. Sri Rama is all-pervading; He is in the heart of all beings, as the inner controller. Then what a power and glory His name possesses!

Some devotees hold that the name (nama) is even superior to the Being (nami) denoted by the name. The moment that nama is uttered, the nami should follow it even as the utterance of a name related to the world rouses in one's consciousness the form of the Object denoted by it. The moment you utter the word Rama', the form of the Lord is aroused in your consciousness. Saint Tulsidas says: "The name is even superior to the Lord, because the nirguna (without attributes) and saguna (with attributes) aspects of Brahman are tasted and realised by the power of the name Rama delivered a single woman, Ahalya, but His name has purificd scores of wicked men. Rama gave salvation to two of his faithful servants, Jatayu and Sabari, but His name has been the saviour of countless wicked persons. Blessed is the son and blessed are his parents who remember Sri Rama in whatsoever way it may be. He who repeats the name of Rama even in dream may wear a pair of shoes made out of the skin of my body. Blessed are the outcast and the pariah who repeat the name of Rama day and night. What is the use of high birth to one who does not repeat Rama nama? The high peaks of mountains give shelter to snakes. Blessed is the sugarcane, the corn and betel leaves that flourish in the plains and give delight to all."

Only those who are endowed with devotion know the power latent in Rama nama. The scientists now declare that sound vibrations have such a tremendous force that they can direct this power to silk fabrics and cleanse them of all dirt more thoroughly than a washerman can; but they have yet to realise that vibrations produced by the singing of the name of God will cleanse their hearts, purify their souls and remove all the invisible dross accumulated in themselves since many births.

The famous Tulsidas had darshan of Rama by repeating this Rama mantra. Samarth Ram Das performed his tapas in Takli village on the banks of the Godavari and chanted Rama mantra thirteen crores of times and eventually had darshan of Rama.

Ramadas of Badrachal had darshan of Rama by constantly repeating the Rama mantra on the holy banks of the Godavari. Such is the power of Rama mantra.

Rama nama has a transforming effect not only on the psychological but also the biological personality. Even physical ailments can be overcome by the chanting of the divine name. Like the mantras Om namah Sivayah and Om namo bhagavate Vasudevayah it is a powerful aid in destroying the animal passions in man. Passions are objective forces, and Rama nama is a unifying force. When one adheres to Rama nama with exclusive and genuine devotion it becomes for one the destroyer of all pains. One's faith must not be divided between two or more mantras, one should stick to Rama nama with full confidence in it. The more the faith and concentration, the quicker does the Lord's name destroy the evils in man.

Rama nama should not be used for the sake of obtaining worldly ends. Use it as a moksha mantra and not as a servant to fetch you the glittering glass-pieces shining in the form of the objects of the world.

Faith and Love

Here is a nice story to illustrate the power of Rama nama:

Kamal, the son of Kabir, asked a merchant to repeat Rama nama twice as a cure for leprosy. The merchant repeated it twice, and yet he was not cured of this dire disease. Kabir was very much annoyed and told Kamal: "You have brought disgrace on my family by asking the merchant to repeat Rama nama

twice. Repetition of Rama nama only once is quite sufficient. Now beat the merchant severely with a stick on his head. Ask him to stand in the Ganges and repeat Rama nama once from the very bottom of his heart." Kamal followed the instructions of his father and gave a good thrashing on the head of the merchant, who began to bleed profusely. He then repeated Rama nama once only with intense feeling from the very core of his being, and was completely cured of his disease.

Kabir sent Kamal to Tulsidas. Tulsidas wrote Rama nama on a tulsi leaf and sprinkled the juice over five hundred lepers. All were cured. Kamal was quite astonished. Then Kabir sent Kamal to Surdas. Surdas asked Kamal to bring the corpse that was floating in the river. Surdas repeated Ra only once (not the full name Rama) in one ear of the corpse and it was brought back to life. Kamal's heart was filled with awe and wonder.

Such is the power of God's name. My dear friends, my educated college youths, my dear barristers, professors, doctors and judges, don't be puffed up with false, worthless college learning.

Repeat the name of the Lord with intense feeling and love from the very bottom of your hearts, with all your being, and realise the supreme bliss, knowledge, peace and immortality right now this very second.

Offences Against the Divine Name

Utterance of the divine name can absolve us from all sins and enable us to attain salvation or love of God (both of which are so difficult to get); but that is possible only when the name is uttered with faith and reverence and the practice is free from all taint. The following are the ten offences against the name:

1.Villification of saints and devotees.
2. Differentiation among names.
3. Irreverence towards the guru.
4. Speaking lightly of the scriptures.
5. Treating the glory of the name as nothing but exaggerated praise.
6. Commission of sins under the cover of the name.

7. Ranking the name with other virtues such as fasting, charity, sacrifices, etc.
8. Recommending practice of the name to irreverent and ungodly persons who are not prepared to hear such advice.
9. Want of love for the name even after hearing its glory.
10. Emphasis of 'I' and 'mine' and attachment to objects of enjoyment.
If through inadvertence one lapses into any of the above ten sins, the only way to be absolved from it is to repeat the name again and repent for the mistake.

Current Account With Lord Ganesha

A chartered accountant's son was Lord Ganesha's devotee. He was highly impressed with the modern system of accounting. His father rendered some service to his clients and their accounts were debited with the value. They did some service to him or sent him some presents and the value was credited to their account. Hardly any money changed hands, yet everything was going on systematically.
He decided to apply the same system to his own dealings. His first concern was to pass the High School Exam. He went to the temple of Lord Ganesha and prayed: "Oh Lord, if I get through the exam, I shall offer you forty coconuts," and he passed. He entered the forty coconuts in Lord Ganesha's account.
He applied for a seat in the University. He promised to offer twenty coconuts to the Lord if he succeeded. He was not successful.
As a penalty, he debited Ganesha's account with 20 coconuts.
Thus the current account was being maintained. If he was successful in the exams, if he recovered from an illness, if he got a profit, Lord Ganesha's account was credited; if he failed, if he became seriously ill, if he lost in business, Lord Ganesha's account was debited.
After fifty years of this accounting, he found that Lord Ganesha owed him 500 coconuts!
Moral: The story illustrates extreme meanness of mind. He who is mean and greedy meets with failure after failure in life. He is ever in want and misery like the young man in the story. Do not be mercenary in your devotion to God. Develop genuine devotion to Him. Fulfil your promises. Your life will be glorious, successful and happy.

JAPA: THE BEST SADHANA

Philosophy of Japa

Japa is the repetition of any mantra or name of the Lord. It is the best of all spiritual practices in this modern age, and is the easiest, too. The divine name alone will give you all success and bestow the highest spiritual attainments. The seeker after truth reaches the highest goal by japa or recitation of the Lord's name (mantra) alone.

Japa is an important limb of yoga. In the Bhagavad Gita you will find: "Among yajnas, I am japa-yajna." In Kali Yuga (iron age), when the physique of the vast majority of persons is not good, rigid hatha yoga practices are very difficult. The practice of japa alone can give eternal peace, bliss and immortality.

Japa is an easy way of God-realisation. Tukaram of Deo (a Maharashtra saint), Dhruva, Prahlada, Valmiki Rishi and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa attained salvation by uttering the name of God.

There is no yoga greater than japa yoga. It can give you whatever you want. It ultimately results in samadhi or communion with the Lord. Japa must become habitual and must be attended with sattvic or divine feeling, purity, love and faith.

One must take to japa very seriously and sincerely. The chanting of His name is but serving Him. You must have the same flow of love and respect (devotion) in your heart at the time of thinking of or remembering His name as you naturally may have in your heart at the time when you really see Him. You should have full faith and belief wine ernie of the name.

Do the japa with feeling. Know the meaning of the mantra. Feel His presence in everything and everywhere. Draw closer and nearer o Him when you repeat the japa. Think He is shining in the chambers of your heart. He is witnessing your repetition of the mantra as He is the witness of your mind. He who repeats the Lord's name with faith, devotion and one-pointed mind will conquer the mind in the end. The chanting of the Lord's name brightens

the mirror of the mind, burns the forest of desires and bathes the whole being in a flood of joy.
God's name is like a lamp kept in the doorway. It gives light both inside and outside the room. Even so, by keeping God's name always on your tongue you will have peace within and without. Just as fire consumes the dross and releases pure gold from its impure ores, so also does the Lord purify your heart, burn all the dross of your lower nature and release you as a pure soul. No-one obtains liberation without the name of the Lord. Your highest duty is to repeat His name always.

Benefits of Japa

Japa purifies the heart.
Japa steadies the mind.
Japa destroys the six enemies of lust, anger, greed, pride, delusion and jealousy.
Japa destroys birth and death.
Japa burns sins.
Japa scorches all innate tendencies.
Japa annihilates attachment.
Japa induces dispassion.
Japa roots out all desires.
Japa makes one fearless.
Japa removes delusion.
Japa gives supreme peace.
Japa develops divine love.
Japa unites the devotee with the Lord.
Japa gives health, wealth, strength and long life.
Japa brings God-consciousness.
Japa bestows eternal bliss.
Japa awakens the kundalini.

Japa gives a nice refreshing, exhilarating, spiritual bath. It wonderfully washes the subtle body, linga sarira or astral body.

Japa is marvellous divine soap for the mind. It cleans it of its various kinds of impurities.

There is power and potency in every mantra. When japa of any mantra is done with intensity it sets up spiritual vibrations which transform the subconscious mind. It changes the mental substance from passion to purity, from rajas into sattva. It calms and strengthens the mind and makes it introspective, checking its outgoing tendencies. It eradicates all kinds of evil thoughts and inclinations, destroys vasanas and reduces the force of thought.

Eventually it leads to the direct darshan of God or Ishta Devata. Japa purifies the mind, induces dispassion and brings you face to face with God.

After sufficient practice of japa your conscious mind gains the much-needed balance and tranquillity and becomes fit to receive, through the super-conscious mind, the divine energy from God, the fountain-source of all powers.

Asanas for Japa

Sit in padma, siddha, svastika or sukha asana for half an hour to start with. Then gradually increase the period to three hours. In one year you can have asana-siddhi (perfection in posture). Any comfortable and easy posture is asana.

Keep the head, neck and trunk in one straight line. Spread a fourfold blanket on the ground, and over this spread a piece of soft white cloth. This will be quite enough. If you can get a good tiger skin, complete with claws, etc., it is all the better. A tiger- skin has got its own advantages. It generates electricity in the body quickly and does not allow leakage of electrical current from the body. It is full of magnetism.

Face the east or the north while you are in the asana. A spiritual neophyte should observe this rule. By facing the north you will be in communion with the sages of the Himalayas and will be mysteriously benefited by their spiritual currents.

Need for a Mala

You must have a rosary or japa mala always in your pocket or around your neck, and underneath your pillow at night when you go to sleep. It will remind you of God when you forget Him owing to the force of avidya (ignorance). At night when you get up for micturition the mala will remind you to roll it once or twice. A mala is a strong weapon, as it were, to annihilate the mind. It is a powerful whip to goad the mind towards God or Brahman. A rudraksha mala or a tulasi mala of 108 beads can be used.

How to Count Japa

Use the fingers of your right hand for counting the number of japa done. The left thumb can dexterously count the number of japa along the three lines in each finger. After you have finished one mala of japa put your left thumb on the first line of the little finger. Then raise it to the line above, and so on. When you finish all the lines of the five fingers it will come to 108 x 15 malas. You can repeat this again. You can use small pieces of stones for each mala or for every 15 malas. There is another method. Mark with the help of a watch placed in front of you how much japa you are able to do in 2 hours.
If within 2 hours you are able to do 21,600 times Ram-japa or OM-japa, repeat thus for 2 hours on the following days also. You have now an easy ready-reckoner with you.

Time for Japa

Get up at 4 o'clock in the morning (brahmamuhurta), which is very favourable for spiritual contemplation, and start doing japa. In the early morning, after slumber, the mind is calm, pure and quite refreshed. It is like a blank sheet of paper and comparatively free from worldly impressions then. It can be moulded very easily at this time. The atmosphere also is charged with more sattva at this particular time.
Wash your hands, feet and face with cold or warm water, if you find it difficult to take a bath. This will suffice. Now start doing japa.

This is the time to catch the meditative wave. Meditation is more important. Then you can take to asanas and pranayama and wind up the full course by another short sitting in japa and meditation. As there is always some drowsiness when you get up and start the practice, it is desirable too sness asans and a little pranayama for five minutes just to drive off this drowsiness and to make yoursel in for japa and meditation.

Where to do Japa

If you sit by the side of a river, lake or well; in a temple; at the foot or top of a mountain or in a lovely garden or solitary room, the mind will be focussed quite easily, without much effort. Or, go to a lonely garden and spend two or three hours there in silent japa, in reading the Bhagavad Gita or the Upanishads, or in meditation.

When you go back to your house you will feel quite refreshed and renovated. You will be a new man charged with new prana.

Sometimes you can visit holy places like Rishikesh, Haridwar, Varanasi, etc., and there you can do japa on the banks of holy rivers like the Ganges. Have satsang with mahatmas. This will give you peace of mind, slowly spiritualise you and regenerate the coarse evil tendencies in your nature. You will find marked improvement. As the mind, while in such sacred places, is free from business worries and family anxieties, you can have an efficient turn out of japa owing to good concentration there. The more you increase your japa, the stronger, purer and calmer you will become.

Meditation Room

Have a separate meditation room under lock and key. Do not allow anyone to enter the room. Burn incense there in the morning and evening. Keep a picture of Lord Krishna, Lord Siva, Sri Rama or Devi in the room. Place your asana in front of the picture. When you repeat the mantra the powerful vibrations set up by it will be lodged in the ether of the room (akasic records). In six months' time you will feel peace and purity in the atmosphere of the

room. There will be a peculiar magnetic aura there. You will actually feel this it you are sincere in your practice.
whine in yominis much disturbed by antagonistic worldly influences, sit in the room and repeat the name of the Lord for al east half an hour. Then immediately you will find an entire change in your mind. Practise this, and feel the soothing spiritual influence yourself. Nothing is so great as spiritual sadhana. You will find, ass result of this, a local Mussoorie in your own house without any Repeat the name of the Lord with devotion in your heart. You will realise God quickly. This is the easiest method in this age. You must systematically and regularly do this. If you are a very busy man and if you lead a travelling life always, you need not have a special room or a special time for meditation but you can do japa wherever and whenever it is convenient.

•Mulabandha and *Kumbhaka in Japa

When you sit in the asana for doing japa, press the genitals with the left heel (if you are sitting in *siddhasana) and contract the anus (the terminal opening of the alimentary canal). This is termed mulabandha in hatha yoga practice. This helps concentration. This practice prevents the *apana-vayu from moving downwards. If you are seated in *padmasana you can do mulabandha without pressing the genitals with the heel.
Retain the breath also as long as you comfortably can. This is kumbhaka. This will steady the mind considerably and increase the power of concentration. You will feel an intense spiritual bliss.

Where to Concentrate

Concentrate gently either on the lotus of the heart (*anahata-chakra) or on the space between the two eyebrows (*ajna-chakra).
Ajna-chakra is the seat of the mind, according to the hatha yoga school. The mind can be controlled easily if you concentrate on this ajna-chakra.

Japa and Karma Yoga

Even when you do manual work, give your hands alone to work, but give the mind to God (do mental japa of the mantra), like the typist or the harmonium player who types or plays and talks to you, or like the lady who knits clothes and talks and jokes with her comrades while she is walking along the road. You will be able to do two things at a time by practice. The manual work will become automatic, mechanical or instinctive. You will have two minds, as it were, for the time being. A portion of the mind will be in the service
They play at cards, move the man in chess play, dictate some passages to a third man, talk to a fourth man in order and continuation, and so on. It is a question of training the mind. Even so, you can so train the mind that you can work with the hands and also remember God at the same time. This is karma yoga and bhakti yoga combined.
Lord Krishna says: "Therefore at all times think of Me, and fight; with mind and reason set on Me, without doubt thou shalt come unto Me alone." Bhagavad Gita (VIII-7). Though the cow grazes on the pasture having been separated from the calf, her mind is always fixed on the calf alone. Similarly, you should fix the mind on God when you do japa, and give your hands to work, which is worship of the Lord.

Three Kinds of Japa

There are three kinds of japa:
(1) Vaikari or verbal
(2) Upamsu with humming sound
(3) Manasic (or mental) wherein the lips do not move.
Mind wants varieties, new sensations. It gets disgusted with monotony. Just as you want egg fruit vegetable today, pumpkin tomorrow and carrot day after tomorrow, the mind wants varieties in japa also; otherwise it becomes dull and refuses to work. Do verbal japa for some time, then with humming sound for some time and then mental for some time.
Sandilya says in Sandilya Upanishad: *"The loud pronunciation gives the reward as stated in the Vedas; the whispering or humming which cannot be heard by*

anyone gives a reward a thousand times more; and menial japa gives a reward a score times more than that."

Loud japa shuts out all worldly sounds. There is no break of japa here. This is one advantage. Whenever sleep tries to overpower you when doing japa at night, take the mala in your hand, roll the beads and do verbal japa. This will put a check to sleep and the ma will remind you of the stoppage of japa. If sleepiness persists, stand up and do the japa.

Do japa in the throat for one year. This is loud japa. Do it in the heart for two years. This is mental japa. Do it in the navel for one year. This kind of japa is associated with the breath.

Mental japa of Rama-mantra can be associated with the breath as in 'soham' japa, or ajapa-japa (japa that is done without moving the lips is ajapa). When you inhale the air repeat Ra mentally; when you exhale repeat Ma mentally. Keep up the practice even during walking. During meditation inside the room you can have this practice. This is the ajapa way of doing Rama-mantra-japa. A beginner with a coarse and gross mind will find it difficult to do mental japa to start with.

Mental japa takes more time than the other two other kinds of japa, but some can do it more quickly. The mind becomes dull after some hours. It cannot turn out the work of japa efficiently. The speed becomes lessened. Those who calculate the number of malas of japa according to the watch should take recourse to rolling beads if there be any such dullness.

When the mind gets tired of mental japa, when you notice that it has begun to wander about, take to loud repetition. The ears also will hear the mantra. There will be more concentration now for some time. One disadvantage in loud repetition is that you get tired of it after about one hour. You will have to combine the three methods, to the best advantage. Use your common sense.

When you advance in practice every pore in the skin and every hair on the body will repeat the mantra forcibly. The whole system will be charged with the powerful vibrations of the mantra. You will be ever in the love of the Lord. You will experience muscular twitchings and will shed profuse tears of bliss. You will be in an exalted divine mood. You will get inspiration, revelation, ecstacy, insight, intuition and supreme bliss. You will compose inspiring poems. You will have various siddhis, divine powers and treasures of heaven.

Number of Japas

Every man is unconsciously repeating the 'so-ham' mantra 21,600 times daily within 24 hours. You should repeat your Ishta mantra at least 21,600 times daily to correspond to the 21,600 natural (so-ham) breaths that every living being takes in and exhales. Then the efficacy of the mantra is great. The mind will be purified quackly.

You must increase the number of japa from 200 to 500 malas (a mala contains 108 beads). Just as you are very keen in taking food twice daily, tea in the morning and cocoa in he evening, etc., you must evince extreme keeness in doing japa also 4 times, in the morning, noon, evening and night. Death may come at any moment without a second's notice. Prepare yourself to meet it with a smile, uttering Sri Ram, Sri Ram and merging in Ram in eternal bliss, infinite glory and Self-knowledge.

It is always better to take to medium speed in japa. It is not the speed but the inner feeling and mental concentration that brings the maximum benefits. Every word must be pronounced very clearly.

There must not be mutilation of any word. This is very very important.

In 14 hours you can do 3,000 (3,000 x 108) malas of Hari OM; in half an hour you can do 10,000 times Sri Rama japa.

If you do japa of a mantra 13 crore times you will have darshan of its presiding divinity in physical form. If you are sincere and earnest you can do this within four years.

Akhanda Japa

Akhanda japa (collective japa) is highly beneficial. The mantra-shakti is awakened quickly. Restlessness and dullness will be soon destroyed. More sattva and harmony will pervade the place where akhanda japa is done. Akhanda japa of any mantra can be done. It can be conducted for 12 hours or more according to convenience. This can be done on Sundays and other holidays when more leisure is at the disposal of the members. Any number of

people can take part in akhanda japa. Each member should be allotted at least one hour's time. Arrangements can be made previously regarding the hour when each particular member will do the japa.
Start the japa at 6 a.m. and continue it up to 6 p.m. Each member is required to be present at least 5 minutes prior to his fixed time. He will wash his hands and feet, sip water from the hollowed palm of the hand and sit near the preceding member, take up his mala and start repeating the mantra in a slightly audible tone -thus the sitting member will know that his successor has taken up the japa, and he may get up as soon as he finishes the mala. Keep the eyes closed while doing japa and seat yourself in the usual pose of asana to which you are accustomed. It is not absolutely necessary that the previous member should get up immediately when his successor relieves him. He may, if he so wishes, continue the japa as before.
The number of malas may be recorded against each member's name. Towards the close of the akhanda japa all the members can assemble together and repeat the mantra. At 6 p.m. have arati (waving of a light) before the Lord's picture and afterwards distribute the sacred prasad.
The members should not be allowed to talk and disturb others.
It would be highly beneficial if, along with the japa, the members can fast, or observe at least partial fast by taking milk and fruits.

Likhita Japa (Mantra Writing)

For half an hour daily write in a notebook your Ishta mantra or guru mantra. Write clearly in ink. On Sundays and holidays do this for one hour. This is likhita japa. You can develop a wonderful power of concentration. Collect your friends also, and let them write their mantras. Prescribe this to all of your family members. Likhita japa is very efficacious. It helps the sadhaka in concentration of the mind and gradually leads to meditation.
An aspirant should select the mantra of his tutelary deity (Ishta), according to his liking or inclination. There is no restriction about any particular script. It may be written in any language.
The following rules may be observed while practicing mantra writing:

1. Regularity and punctuality should be observed. This will itself bring the requisite help and be of the utmost benefit to the sadhaka.
2. Physical and mental purity should be observed. Before sitting for mantra-writing, the face, hands and feet should be washed. Effort should be made to keep the mind pure during mantra-writing. Drive out all worldly thoughts.
3. Continue to sit in one pose as long as possible. Frequent change of a pose or asana should be avoided. Sitting in one asana will increase your power of endurance and also considerable energy will be preserved.
4. Observe silence during the practice. Too much of speaking results in waste of energy and waste of time. Silence helps in an increased out-turn of work.
5. Avoid looking hither and thither. Fix your eyes on the notebook.
This will help concentration of mind during the practice.
6.Repeat the mantra mentally also while writing it in the notebook.
This will make a threefold impression in your mind. Gradually your whole being will be involved and engrossed in the mantra.
7. Fix a particular number of mantras for one sitting. This will keep your practice intact and you will never get out of touch with the
mantra.
8. When you have once started the practice, do not leave it till you have finished the daily quota of one sitting. Do not allow your mind to be diverted to other engagements, as this will be an obstruction in the sadhana. Have at least half an hour's writing at one sitting.
9. To help concentration, one uniform system of writing from top to bottom or from left to right, may be maintained during a particular sitting. The whole mantra should be written at once in continuity.
Do not break it in the middle when you come to the end of the line.
10. When a mantra is selected by you, try to stick to it tenaciously.
Frequent change of mantra is not advisable.
The above rules, if strictly observed, will help you much in your quick evolution. You will develop wonderful concentration. By prolonged and constant practice the inherent power of the mantra (mantra-shakti) will be awakened, and will fill your very existence with the divinity of the mantra.
The notebook should be well kept and treated with respect and purity. When completed it should be stored in a box and kept in your meditation room in

front of the Lord's picture. The very presence of these mantra-notebooks will create favourable vibrations requisite for your sadhana.
The benefits of mantra-writing cannot be adequately described.
Besides bringing about purity of heart and concentration of mind, it gives you control of asana, control of sense-organs - particularly the eyes and the tongue — and fills you with the power of endurance. You attain peace of mind quickly. You approach nearer to God through mantra-shakti. These benefits can be experienced only through regular and incessant practice. Those who are not conn is ant with this yoga should start the practice immediately and even if they take to this practice for half an hour daily, they will realise its benefits within six months.

General Hints

The name of God is a great boat with which we can cross this ocean of worldly life.
Remember God always. Live in Him. Take a deep plunge in Him. Merge yourself in Him. Give up all other worldly thoughts.
He will spiritualise and elevate you. Have strong faith. March boldly onwards in your spiritual practice. Do not look backwards. Do not look to the right or left.
Repeat any prayer and then sit for japa. The mind will then be elevated. You will find it pleasant to rotate the beads of your mala.
You must use your common-sense throughout your spiritual practice.
It is always better to take a medium speed. It is not the speed but the inner feeling and concentration that bring about the maximum benefits in japa.
Every word must be pronounced very, very clearly. There must be no mutilation of any word. This is important. Some people finish one lakh of japa daily within seven hours in a hurried manner just as a hired carpenter or contractor does the work in order to get the wages. Don't have any contract work with God. There cannot be any real devotion in having any contract with God. However, there is one advantage in doing japa with electric speed. If the mind is dull or wandering wildly in sensual objects you can keep up very high

speed for 15 or 20 minutes. This will stimulate the dull mind and bring it back quickly to the focussing point.

There is a special, mysterious, spiritual force or wonderful magnetic power at the sandhi (junction of time — at sunrise and sunset). The mind will then be elevated quickly and filled with sattva. Concentration at this time will come by itself without any effort. Japa should be done at the sandhis.

Do 21,600 times japa of any mantra daily. Speak the truth.

Control your anger. Do charity. Serve elders, sadhus, sannyasins, bhaktas and poor and sick persons with feeling.

Mauna for three hours checks the excessive rajasic nature of the tongue. By sitting continuously on one asana for three hours get asana jaya (victory over the posture) and check the excessive rajasic nature of the legs (a desire to move to various places). Asana and mauna will increase peace. Having adopted these two methods, stay alone for some hours in the room. Do not mix with anybody. Plug the cars with wax or close the ears with the thumbs (yoni mudra).

This is an auxiliary to give you inner life and shut you away from external bustle and jarring sounds. Now seriously do japa and meditation. You will get peace.

Sleep alone in a separate room. This is the best sadhana for maintaining celibacy. Whenever passion troubles you, increase the number of japa — do 200 malas or even more. Fast for one day completely, and take only milk and fruits on the second day. Do simple pranayama, retaining the breath till you count 60 x OM.

Study one chapter of the Bhagavad Gita each day. Observe silence; do not talk to your wife, and do not laugh. Remain in a separate room and keep the mind fully occupied with something or other.

This is most important. Do not use scents and flowers, do not touch romantic novels or go to theatres and cinemas. Sleep on a coarse mattress.

Resist temptation by taking refuge in the name of the Lord, Have love for solitude and silence. Have inward life. All miseries will terminate and you will enjoy supreme felicity. Practice earnestly my dear friends. Be sincere. What more can I tell you? I cannot put grass into the mouth of a cow. She will have to graze herself. Drink the spiritual nectar yourself.

Practical Aids to Japa

You have now a thorough knowledge of japa yoga and the glory of the names of God. Now start real sadhana from this minute. I have given below a number of practical hints of great use for your daily sadhana. Note and follow them carefully.

1. The most effective time is early dawn (brahmamuhurta) and dusk when sattva is predominant. Regularity and system are very essential.
2. Take a bath, or wash your hands, feet, face and mouth before sting for japa in the morning. At other times his is notabsolute necessary. Do japa whenever you have leisure, specially during the Junctions of the day (morning, noon and evening) and before going to bed.
3. It is highly advantageous to sit in the same place every day. Do not change it now and then.
controls rajas and aids concentration.
4.A comfortable posture helps to make the mind also steady,
5. Face the east or the north and sit in a separate meditation ro or any good place, such as temple, river bank, under a banyan tree or a peepul tree or a peepul tree, etc.
6. Deer-skin or kusha-mat or a rug should be used. This helps to conserve body-electricity.
7. Invoking the aid of the Ishta with appropriate prayer induces proper sattvic feeling.
8. Select any mantra of name of God (preferably that given by your guru) and repeat it from 108 to 1080 times daily (one to ten malas).
9. Keep your guru mantra a secret. Never disclose it to anyone.
10. Use a rudraksha or tulasi mala of 108 beads.
11. Using a mala helps alertness and acts as an incentive to carry on the japa continuously. Resolve to finish a certain minimum number of malas before leaving the seat.
12. Use only the middle finger and thumb of the right hand for rolling the beads. The index finger is prohibited.

13. Do not allow the mala to hang below the navel. Keep the hand near the heart or the nose.
14. The mala must not be visible to you or others. Cover it with a towel or kerchief, which must be pure and washed daily.
15. Do not cross the meru (crown or head) of the mala while rolling the beads. Turn back when you come to it.
16. Pronounce each letter of the mantra correctly and distinctly. Do not repeat it too fast or too slow. Increase the speed only when the mind wanders.
17. Variety in japa is necessary to sustain interest, avoid fatigue and counteract monotony. Do mental japa for sometime. If the mind wanders take to labial japa (whispering or muttering) for some time, or loud japa, by rotation, and come back to mental japa again as soon as possible.
18. Vigilance and alert attitude is a very important point. You will be fresh and alert when you commence. After a time unconsciously the mind will begin to wander, and drowsiness will overcome you.
Keep widely alert throughout.
19. Associate the japa with rhythmic breathing or pranayama and meditate on the form of your deity. Keep a picture or idol of the deity in front of you. Think of the meaning of the mantra while repeating
20. Side by side with japa think of the Lord as present before you and picture His entrancingly beautiful form. This practice adds tremendously to the efficacy or power of your sadhana.
21. Do not beg of God any worldly objects while doing japa. Feel that your heart is being purified and the mind is becoming steady by the power of the mantra with the grace of God.
22. Observe mauna and avoid distractions, calls or engagements.
23. Concluding prayer and rest is important. After japa is over do not immediately leave the place, mix with people or plunge into worldly activity. Sit very quietly for about 10 minutes at least, humming some prayer, remembering the Lord or reflecting upon His infinite love. Then, after devout prostration, leave the place and commence your routine duties. Spiritual vibrations will be intact.
24. Keep up the current of japa mentally even at other times, in whatever works you may be engaged.

25. Carry on your sadhana with perseverance and tenacity, without break, and realise the glorious goal of life and enjoy supreme bliss.

Method of Mantra-Purascharana

The mode of repetition of a mantra with feeling, in a particular manner, a definite number of times, with right observances, until a fixed number of japa is reached, in order to obtain substantial benefit out of the mantra, is called purascharana.

The practitioner has to observe certain rules and regulations that have been laid down in the scriptures in regard to purascharana, and has to undergo perfect dietetic discipline also in accordance with those injunctions.

The mantra, when it is mentally recited in this manner, will bring to the sadhaka all that he desires within its jurisdiction.

Brightness, clearness and tranquillity of mind, contentment and dispassion towards sense objects will dawn if the purascharana is done without any selfish desire or motive behind it. The sadhaka will see effulgence everywhere and his own body will seem to be bright with light, being completely divine in nature. He will see his Deity alone everywhere and whatever he desires will be at his finger tips.

The following is a brief description of the rules
purascharana:

Diet: The practitioner of purascharana of a mantra should take the following diet: vegetables, fruits, milk, roots and tubers, bailey, havishya (rice cooked along with ghe, sugar and milk, am which has been offered to God) or he may live on pure bhikha alone One who takes only milk-diet during the whole period of his sadhana will have
mantra-siddhi by repeating the mantra only a
single lakh times. But he who takes others of the prescribed diet will have siddhi only after finishing three lakh japas.

Place for Japa: Any holy place of pilgrimage, any place on the banks of holy rivers, caves, top of hills and mountains, confluence of rivers, huge holy forests, below the ashvattha (peepul) tree, tulasi gardens, temples, seashore and solitary places, are all recommended as places fit for purascharana. If

none of these can be easily found, one may do it in his own house; but japa done in one's own house will produce only as much effect as it commonly will under ordinary cicrumstances. In holy places the effect will be one hundred times more. On river banks it will be one lakh times more.

Directions: The sadhaka should sit facing either the east or the north, during japa. During the night-time he may sit facing the north only.

Bath: One should bathe three times a day, and if it is impossible, he may take bath at least twice, or even once, according to his convenience and prevailing circumstances.

Asana: Padma, siddha,
svastika, sukha or vira asana is
recommended for japa. Cotton cloth, blanket, silk or tiger-skin should be used as a seat, which will bring auspiciousness, jnana (supreme wisdom) and early siddhi.

Japa done by sitting on Krishnajina (skin of a particular kind of deer) will give jnana. Tiger's skin will bring the bliss of liberation.

When neither of these asanas is available, an asana made of kusha grass will do for the purpose.

Use of Malas: Sphatika (crystal) mala, tulasi mala or rudraksha mala may be used for counting. The mala should be respected and worshipped, and kept in all sacredness. After finishing japa it must be kept in a pure and clean place. An advanced aspirant can use any mala, or he may not use the rnala at all. It all depends upon the stage of evolution which one is in.

How to do Japa: Abstracting the mind from all worldly objects, being the inner meaning of the mantra, one should repeat the mantra neither very quickly nor too slowly. It should be repeated as many lakhs of times as there are letters contained in the mantra. This is called akshara laksha japa. For example, the japa of the panchakshara of Siva should be done five hundred thousand times, the ashtakshara of Narayana eight hundred thousand times, and the dvadashakshara of Krishna twelve hundred thousand times. In the case of impossibility, half of the required number may be done: but in no case should it be less than a lakh.

In ancient days people's minds were very pure and powerful. and so akshara laksha japa used to bring to them siddhi or direct realisation of the Deity. In

these days, however, people are of impure minds, and so they may not have darshan of the Divinity through akshara laksha japa done only once. Cinema-impurities, drama-impurities and various other kinds of impurities clog the minds of the people of these days, and they are not able to achieve any tangible progress. They have to continue the japa purascharana until direct realisation. In the case of some persons several purascharanas may have to be done even for effecting the preliminary purification of the mind itself. After this the purascharana that is done will bring realisation of the Deity.

If it is found that even after the purascharana siddhi of the mantra is not got due to some old evil samskaras of the previous birth, one should perform it once again. One should not be misled by anybody, but should continue until the heart is completely purified and ultimate siddhi is gained.

It should be borne in mind that japa done during the time of solar or lunar eclipses will produce a tremendous effect and hence this rare opportunity should not be missed by anybody, whenever it offers itself. The number of japa done during each day should be constant and should not vary day by day.

Havan (or Homa): Every day, after inishing the japa, oblations ol the ghee, rice barley, etc., that are prescribed (equal in number lo one-tenth of the japa done that are prefered in the sacred fire. Or else this may also be done sauhe end of each lakh, according "o the renience. The havan should be performed strictly according fo the rules laid down by the brahmana portions of the Vedas Kalpa Sutras and the Smritis. In this ma portions advisable to get the priest.

In case one is unable to perform havan and observe its restrictions, he can worship the Deity; do, in addition to the total japa already done, further japa equal in number to one-tenth thereof, and feed brahmins and mahatmas afterwards.

The aspirant should not do purascharana for any petty selfish end. Worship with a selfish motive will not bring to him real spiritual knowledge and experience, or inner strength. Japa should be done with an aspiration to obtain the grace of God and realise God. There is nothing so great and noble as attaining God-consciousness.

Therefore let your mantra-purascharana be free from all mundane desires. Do not desire for even heaven. Love only God, and offer the japa-purascharana at

His feet. When He is pleased, nothing remains unachieved for you. The best purascharana is that which is done for self-purification and direct realisation of God.

Those who take recourse to purascharana and keeping up of daily diary, should be very exact and accurate in keeping the record.

There must be mathematical accuracy. They should watch the mind very carefully and if it becomes dull during japa they should do more japa till the dullness vanishes. It is better to take into consideration the number of japa done when the mind is in full spirit and to omit that which is done when the mind is lethargic. This is erring on the safe side.

Sleeping on the bare ground, celibacy, worship of the Deity three times a day, prayer to the Deity, faith in the mantra, bath three times every day abandoning the oil-bath, are to be observed strictly as vows during the period of purascharana.

Absent-mindedness, laziness, spitting while doing japa, anger, relaxation of legs from the asana, speaking in foreign language (all except Sanskrit and one's mother tongue are foreign languages), speaking with people of the opposite sex and with unspiritual persons, chewing betel leaves, sleeping during day-time, receiving fits, attending singing and dancing, mischief-making —all these should be rigidly shunned, if dancing, mischie maki sa all . Salt, meat, pungent things, sweetmeats from the bazaare pulses, telling lies, doing injustice, applying sandal-paste to tex body, wearing howers, sexual intercourse or talking abound to maters and mixing with such people should be put an end to completely during mantra purascharana.

The sadhaka should not sit placing one leg on the other, and he should not touch his feet with hands. Concentration of the mind on the mantra and its meaning is very essential at all times. Japa should not be done when walking here and there or looking this side and that side. One should never be engaged in other activities even in the mind, and should not be murmuring, grumbling, etc., or covering the face with any kind of garment.

Atonement for Break of Japa: On seeing or talking with immoral persons, sneezing through the nose, passing wind through the anus or yawning, japa should at once be stopped and is to be continued only after getting oneself

purified by sipping water from the cupped palm, pranayama and looking at the sun.

Anushthana

Anushthana is the practise of religious austerity. It is observance of certain disciplines for the sake of obtaining some object or objects of desires. The desire or the object may even be final emancipation. (Even that is a desire, though it is generally not included among desires.) One who performs anushthana has to be free from worldly engagements until the end of the anushthana. He should be completely engrossed in one thought concerned with the austere performance of the observances prescribed by the scriptures. Such disciplines mould men and make them fit to realise the higher objects of their desires and ambitions.

Generally the highest form of anushthana is unselfish worship of God for the sake of self-purification and final emancipation. There is no anushthana better than this. Other anushthanas done for the sakt of petty material ends are the outcome of ignorance and are not spiritual. Spiritual anushthana is based on discrimination, and has for its ideal the liberation of the soul from the round of birth and death.

Generally by anushthana the scriptures mean only japa and study:

Meditation is not considered as an anushthana. It is a higher step where the word 'anushthana' loses its meaning. Worship also can be considered as an anushthana, though it is not included in the

orthodox conception. The rules for all anushthanas constitute the central idea that there should be exclusive occupation in the performance of anushthana to the total detachment from all family-engagements or worldly activities. Even worldly thoughts should not enter the mind. Anushthana is a great tapas or austerity and should be performed with great reverence, faith and carefulness. Anushthanas can be practised for a day, a week, a fortnight, a month, forty-eight days, ninety-six days, three months, six months or one year. The duration depends upon the ability and the liking of the performer. He can choose any kind of anushthana according to his circumstances.

When you get your holidays, plunge yourself in doing anushthana either at home or preferably at Rishikesh or on the banks of the Ganges or the Jumuna. Do some lakhs or crores of japa vigorously, living on milk and fruits and observing mauna. You will realise wonderful results, tremendous purity of heart and have actual darshan of God. If you can do it for six months, it is all the better. Intense sadhana in solitude is very necessary if you want to reap a good spiritual harvest.

The rigour of the sadhana is dependent upon the constitution and health of the individual. A sick man is not required to take a cold bath thrice daily. An unhealthy man with a very weak body is not required to observe absolute fast. A person suffering from an acute disease is not required to forgo taking medicine. Commonsense is the fundamental factor in all sadhanas. No rule is an eternal rule.

Rules change from place to place, from time to time and from one condition to another condition. A sadhaka of Madras may live only with a langotee even in the dead of winter. But a sadhaka living in icy Gangotri cannot be expected to practise the same method even in summer. The climate of the Himalayas is not like that of Trivandrum or Madras. To hold an umbrella when it is raining heavily is not against the practice of anushthana. A pair of shoes used when walking over the glaciers of Kailas or Manasarovar will not prove detrimental to anushthana. Absolute necessities of the body are not hindrances. Abnormal cravings, not the normal requirements, are against anushthana. The objective of all anushthanas is rigorous mental discipline and not mere physical mortification.

Strict brahmacharya is an absolute necessity for all anushthanas. Truth-speaking and non-injury are absolute necessities, for these are mental disciplines.

Any action done against the feeling of the mind is not conducive to the rigour of the anushthana. The actions of the mind alone are actions, not those of the body. One who feels one thing and does another thing is a hypocrite. To him the fruit of sadhana will not accrue. The mind is the author of all actions. The body is only the instrument. Suppressing the effect when the cause is vigorously working will not help in the annihilation of the cause. The mind has to be calmed, and for that all sadhanas are done in one way or the other.

Japa Anushthana

An Ishta-mantra is selected first. The object of anushthana should be within the limits of the mantra chosen; e.g. one should not do japa of Hanuman in order to get a son. Foolish desire should not be cherished when performing anushthana. One should not do it for destroying or harming other beings. This is a great blunder. This will lead to the destruction of the performer himself, if the other party is more powerful than the performer. Generally a sublime spiritual desire should be kept in view when any anushthana is practised.

The japa-sadhaka should start his anushthana in the early morning at brahmamuhurta on an auspicious day. He should take a bath in a river or even in the water of a well if other water is not available. He should observe mauna all along until the completion of the day's anushthana. The major portion of the day should be utilised for japa. The sadhaka should offer prayers to the sun and the devata of the mantra which he is going to take up. He should offer his daily prayers. Then he should sit on a clean place facing the east or the north with a mala in his hand. His mind should be concentrated on the Deity of the mantra. The purpose of the anushthana should be borne in mind all along. Complete mauna should be observed. The eyes should be shut. The senses should be withdrawn. There should be no other thought except that of the ideal before him.

The sadhaka should not approach his wife at any time until the whole of the anushthana is over for the prescribed period. There Should not be any thought of wife, children or property during the performance of the anushthana or even during rest at night. These anushthana.

are all hindrances in the attainment of the object desired out of the

It is better to feed at least one person daily until the end of the anushthana. On the last day a havan should be performed with offerings equal to one-tenth of the total number of japa done. On the last day also poor-feeding may be conducted for the satisfaction of one's self. Water-libations, equal in number to that done in havan, may be given, or else (if it is found to be inconvenient) the number of japa may be increased by that number.

To put it in a nutshell, japa anushthana is performance of japa for a protracted period with concentration of mind and without any thought of the external world. This leads to the achievement of the object of desire.

Svadhyaya Anushthana

The sadhaka takes up the study of the Vedas, the Mahabharata, Ramayana or Bhagavatam for reading. In the case of the Bhagavatam it is called the saptaha. In the case of the Vedas it is called adhyayana. In the case of the other two it is called prarayana.
The same disciplines as detailed above should be observed. Libation, havan, etc., should be performed as in japa-anushthana.

Other Anushthanas

All anushthanas can be performed on the same lines with slight changes according to the necessity of the occasion. A woman will have slight changes in the rules regarding performances. She should not start the anushthana during the time of her menses. Nor should the menses occur in the middle of the anushthana. Generally it is better for women to take up anushthana only for a period of less than a month. They should not do anushthana while they are suckling a child. Women should observe brahmacharya during the performance of anushthana. They should not take up anushthana of gayatri japa or Veda adhyayana, but all other rules are as for men.
There is no time limit for anushthana. It all depends upon the liking of the individual. It can be done even for a single day. It has its own effect. But it is better to practise for long periods, since the mind is well disciplined in such practices. The longer the anushthana, the greater the power that the sadhaka gets. He becomes like a yogi, possessed of health, wealth, prosperity, knowledge and power.
Whatever he wishes for, he gets. Anushthana can be performed even in nighttime. As a matter of fact the practice at night is more powerful and brings quicker results than that done during day-time.

At night the mind is calm and free from the world. That is why all practices at night have got a greater force.
Anushthana is a precursor to the practice of yoga. It disciplines the mind and prepares the mind for yoga meditation. It is a severe austerity which, if performed without any worldly desire, will lead the sadhaka to the height of spiritual illumination.

Mantras

Pranava: OM (Aum) is the name or symbol of God, Ishvara or Brahman. OM is everything. OM is your real name. It covers the whole three-fold experience of man and stands for all the phenomenal worlds. From OM this sense-universe has been projected. The world exists in OM and is dissolved in Om. 'A' represents the physical plane. 'U' represents the mental and astral plane, the world of intelligent spirits and all heavens. 'M' represents the whole deep sleep state and all that is unknown even in your wakeful state, that is beyond the reach of the intellect.
OM represents all, OM is the basis of your life, thought and intelligence. All words which denote objects are centred in Om.
Hence the whole world has come from Om, rests in OM and dissolves in Om.
The japa of OM (pranava japa) has a tremendous influence on the mind. If you chant OM loudly 3 or 6 or 12 times, it will drive away all worldly thoughts from the mind and remove tossing of mind.
The pronunciation of the sacred syllable Om has engaged the attention of all Europeans devoted to Eastern studies. The vibrations set up by this word are so powerful that, if one persists in taking recourse to them, they would bring the largest buildings to the ground. This seems difficult to believe until one has tried the practice; but once having tried it one can easily understand how the above statement may be true. I have tested the power of the vibrations and can quite believe that the effect would be as stated.
Pronounced as spelt, it will have a certain effect upon the student but pronounced in its correct method, it arouses and transfonn condiatom in his physical body, setting up new vibrations and conditions, and awakening the sleeping power of the body.

Three Important Mantras: If you are a devotee of Lord Narayana, repeat **Om namo Narayanaya.**
If you are a devotee of Lord Krishna, repeat **Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya,** the great mantra which was given to Dhruva by Lord Narada, enabling him to come face to face with the Lord.
If you are a devotee of Lord Siva, repeat **Om namah Sivaya,** the great panchakshara (five-syllabled) mantra.
[Before you do japa, recite the dhyana sloka of your Ishta Devata. Bhaktas of Lord Narayana may recite the dhyana sloka:

Dhyeyassada Savitru mandala madhyavartir Narayana — sarasijasana sannivishtah keyuravan makarakundalavan kiriti Hari hiranmayavapur dhrita - sankhacakrah.

This is the meditation upon Narayana.

If you are a devotee of Lord Krishna, recite:

Vasudeva sutam devam Kamsa canura mardanam
Devaki parama nandam Krishna vande Jagatgurum.

If you are devotee of Lord Siva, repeat the sloka:

Shantam padmasanastham shashadharamakulam panchavakthram trinetram
Shulam vajram cha khadyam parashumabhayadam dakshinange vahantam.
Nagam pasam cha khadgam damarukasahitam chankusham vamabhage
Nanalamkaradiptam sphatikamaninibham
parvatisham namami

and meditate upon Lord Siva, holding trisul and damaru in His hands.
Sing the panchakshari mantra (Om Namah Sivaya) or
Chandrasekhara chandrasekhara chandrasekhara pahiman

Chandrasekhara chandrasekhara chandrasekhara rakshaman
Markandeya sang this and attained immortality. On the same lines there is a kirtan sung by Appayya Dikshita:

Sambho mahadeva deva-siva
Sambho mahadeva devesa sambho

Sri Rama's Ishta Devata was Lord Siva, so a bhakta of Rama should repeat Om namah Sivaya, the mantra of Lord Siva, for six months in the beginning. He can have Rama's darshan quickly.]

Maha-mrityunjaya Mantra:

Om tryambakam yajamahe
Sugandhim pushtivardhanam
Urvarukamiva bandhanan
Mrityormukshiya mamritat

"We worship the three-eyed One (Lord Siva) who is fragrant and who nourishes all beings; may He liberate us from death, for the sake of immortality, even as the cucumber is severed from its bondage (of the creeper.)"

Maha-mrityunjaya mantra is a life-giving mantra. In these days when life is very complex, accidents are an everyday affair; this mantra wards off deaths by snake-bite, lightning, motor-accidents, fire-accidents, cycle-accidents, water-accidents, air-accidents and accidents of all descriptions. Besides, it has a great curative effect. Diseases pronounced incurable by doctors are cured by this mantra, when chanted with sincerity, faith and devotion. It is a weapon against all diseases. It is a mantra to conquer death.
Maha-mrityunjaya mantra is Lord Siva's mantra. It bestows health, long life, peace, wealth, prosperity, satisfaction immortality (moksha).
On your birthday repeat this mantra at least 50,000 times perform havan (fire ceremony) and feed the poor and the sick. will bestow on you health, long life, peace, prosperity and liberation

Bija-akshara

A bija-akshara is a seed-letter. It is a very powerful mantra. Every devata has his or her own bija-akshara. The greatest of all bija-aksharas is OM or Pranava, for it is the symbol of Brahman or the Paramatman Himself and contains within itself all the other bija-aksharas. OM is the general sound or the common seed from which all the particular sounds or secondary seeds proceed. The letters of the alphabet are only emanations from OM, which is the root of all sounds and letters. There is no mantra superior to or greater than OM. OM, as it is pronounced ordinarily, is an outward gross form of the real subtle inaudible state of sound which is called the amatra or the immeasurable fourth transcendental state.

As the various Devatas are the aspects or forms of the One Supreme Being, so the various bija-aksharas or bija-mantras are so many aspects or forms of the supreme bija or mantra, viz., OM.

Even the letters 'A', 'U', and 'M' do not really give the transcendental or original state of sound. Even this triliteral sound is only an expression or manifestation of the highest primal sound or vibration. The transcendental sound of OM is heard only by yogis and not by the ordinary ear. In the correct pronunciation of OM the sound proceeds from the navel, with a deep and harmonious vibration, and gradually manifests itself by stages at the upper part of the nostrils where the anusvara or the chandrabindu is sounded.

Generally a bija-mantra (seed mantra) consists of a single-letter. Sometimes it constitutes several syllables. For example, the bija-mantra "kam' has a single letter with the anusvara or the chandrabindu which forms termination of all bija-mantras. In the chandrabindu, nada and bindu are blended together. Some bija-mantras are made up of compound letters, such as the mantra "hrim'.

The bija-mantras have a significant inner meaning and often do not convey any meaning on their face. Their meaning is subtle, mystic. The form of the bija-mantra is the form of the Devata signified by it.

The bijas of the Devatas or the presiding intelligences of the five Seat elements, viz, ether, air, fire, water and earth, are respectively ham, yam, ram, vam and lam.
The meanings of a few bija-mantras are given in the Appendix.
Sri-vidya: Sri-vidya is the great mantra of Tripurasundari Or Bhuvaneshvari or Mahamaya. It is also called the panchadasi or the panchadasakshari, for it is formed of fifteen letters. In its developed form it consists of sixteen letters and is called shodashi or the shodashakshari. The aspirant should directly get initiation of this mantra from a guru, and should not start reading it for himself or doing japa of it of his own accord. This is a very powerful mantra and, when it is not properly repeated, it may harm the worshipper.
So it is imperative that it should be got directly from a guru who has got siddhi of this mantra.
The general rule is that this mantra should be repeated after one's passing through certain stages of self-purificaiton through other mantras. In the beginning a purascharana of Ganesha-mantra should be done. Then purascharanas of Gayatri-mantra should be done. Then purascharanas of Gayatri-mantra, Maha-mrityunjaya-mantra and Durga-mantra (vedic or tantric) have to be done. After this the panchadashakshari and the shodashakshari have to be taken up for japa.
To sum up: The bija-mantras and the Sri-vidya should not be repeated by those who are not well acquainted with them. Only those who have a very good knowledge of the Sanskrit language and who have been directly initiated by a guru (who has mantra-siddhi) can take up the japa of bija-mantras and the Sri-vidya. Others should not approach these mantras and should do only their own Ishta-mantras which are easy to pronounce and remember.

Japa of Mahamantra

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare
Hare

At the end of Dvapara Yuga, Narada went to Brahma and addressed Him thus: "O Lord, how shall I, roaming over the earth, be able to cross Kali Yuga?"

To which Brahma thus replied: "Well asked. Harken to that which all the Vedas keep secret and hidden, through which one may eter the mundane existence of Kali Yuga. He shakes off the eri ellects of Kali through the mere uttering of the name of the Lord
Narayana, who is the primeval Purusha."
Again Narada asked Brahma: "What is the name?"
To which Hiranyagarbha (Brahma) replied thus: (the words are) "Hare, Rama, Hare, Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare, Hare, Krishna, Hare, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare. These sixteen names (words) are destructive to the evil effects of Kali. No better means than this is to be seen in all the Vedas. These sixteen names destroy the veil which produces the sense of individuality of jiva surrounded by the sixteen kalas (rays). Then, like the sphere of the sun which shines fully after the clouds screening it disperse, Parabrahman alone shines."
Narada asked: "O Lord, what are the rules to be observed with reference to it?"
Brahma replied "There are no rules for it. Whoever in a pure or an impure state utters these always, attains the same world of (or proximity with, or the same form of, or absorption into) Brahma.
"Whoever utters this mantra composed of sixteen names or words, three and a half kotis*, (or thirty-five million) times, crosses the sin of the murder of a brahmana (knower of Brahman). He becomes purified from the sin of the theft of gold. He becomes purified from the sin of cohabitation with women of low caste. He is purified from the sins of wrong done to ancestors, devas and men. Having given up all dharmas, he becomes freed at once from all sins.
He is at once released from all bondage."

MEDITATION ON GAYATRI

Om bhur bhuvah svah tat savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dheemahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat

Gayatri is the 'Blessed Mother' of the Vedas. It is a symbol of God, the Lord of created beings. Japa of gayatri mantra produces purity of mind, without which you can do nothing in the spiritual line and without which you can never effect an iota of spiritual progress. Gayatri is an effective universal prayer. (It is also known as the Brahma gayatri.)
The following is the meaning of each word.

Om — Para Brahman
Bhur - bhu loka (physical plane)
Bhuvah — antariksha (sky)
Svah — svarga loka (celestial region)
Tat — Paramatma
Savitur — Ishvara (Surya)
Varenyam — fit to be worshipped
Bhargo - remover of sins of ignorance
Devasya - glory (jnana svaroop)
Dheemahi — we meditate
Dhiyo - buddhi (intellect)
Yo - which
Nah — our
Prachodayat - enlighten

Meaning of Gayatri

Let us meditate on Ishvara and His glory, who has created the universe, who is fit to be worshipped, who is the remover of all sins and ignorance. May He enlighten our intellect.
The aspirant prays to Mother Gayatri: "O Beloved Mother! At the present moment I have taken my body as the self owing to avidya or ignorance, because of my impure intellect. Give me a pure intellect which will enable me to know my real nature. Give me light and knowledge."
There is
no mantra superior to gayatri. As OM is for

sannyasins, so is gayatri for brahmacharins and householders. The fruits that are attained by meditation on OMkara can be attained by meditation on gayatri.

Get up at 4 a.m. in brahmamuhurta and start japa and meditation on Gayatri (the five-faced Devi seated in a lotus flower), sitting on padmasana, siddhasana or virasana, facing north or east.

Burn incense in the room. In summer you can take a bath; in winter you can simply wash your face, hands and feet and sip water from the cupped palm only. Continue the japa for two hours or more.

Have another sitting at night between 7 and 8 p.m. Constantly feel that you are receiving light, purity and wisdom from Gayatri. This is important. Keep the image of the Gayatri at the space between the eyebrows, by closing the eyes and concentrate there, or keep the image in the lotus of the heart and concentrate there. You will have darshan of Gayatri.

It is better if you do japa of gayatri 3,000 to 4,000 times daily.

Your heart will be purified rapidly. If you are not able to do this number, you can do 1008 times daily. If you find it difficult to do this number also, do at least 108 times daily, 36 times at sunrise, 36 times at noon, 36 times at sunset. There is special, mysterious spiritual force or wonderful magnetic power at the junction of sunrise and sunset. The mind will be elevated quickly. It will be filled with saliva. Concentration will come by itself without any effort at this time. If you find it difficult to get up at brahmamuhurta, get ud before sunrise. That man who fails to do gayatri at sunrise and sunset fails in the discharge of his daily duties. He becomes a fallen man. He loses vigour and vitality.

Through the nine names of the gayatri mantra the Lord is praised. "Dheemahi' is worship of the Lord. 'Dhiyo prachodayat' is prayer. Herein there are five halts or stops. Om in pra hirst stop; 'Bhur bhuvah svah' the second; Tat Savitr varenyam ' the third; Bhargo devasya deemahi the fourth; and ahiro yo nah prachodayat' is the fifth. While chanting or doing japa of the mantra, we should stop a little at every stop or halt.

Savita is the presiding deity of the gayatri mantra, Fire (agni) is the mouth, Visvamitra is the rishi and gayatri is the metre. It is recited in the investiture of sacred thread, practice of pranayama and japa. He who meditates on Gayatri meditates on Lord Vishnu.

A man can repeat gayatri mentally in all states while lying, sitting, walking, etc. There is no sin of commission and omission of any sort in its repetition. It is the gayatri mantra alone that can be commonly prescribed for all the Hindus. The Lord commands in the Vedas: "Let one mantra be common to all." Hence the gayatri should be the one mantra for all the Hindus. The secret lore of the Upanishads is the essence of the four Vedas, while gayatri with the three sacred syllables - bhuh, bhuvah, svaha - is the essence of the Upanishads. He is the real brahmin who knows and understands the gayatri thus. Without knowledge of it he is a sudra (of low caste), even if he is well-versed in the four Vedas.

Benefits of Gayatri Japa

There is nothing more purifying on the earth, as well as in the heaven, than the gayatri. The japa of gayatri brings the same fruit as the recitation of all the four Vedas. This single mantra if repeated three times a day brings good. It is the mantra of the Vedas. It destroys sins and bestows splendid health, beauty, strength, vigour, vitality and magnetic aura in the face.
Gayatri destroys the three kinds of pain, and bestows the four kinds of purushartha - viz: dharma (righteousness),
artha
(wealth), kama (desired objects) and moksha (liberation or freedom).
It destroys the three knots of ignorance — avidya (nescience), kama (lust) and karma (action). Gayatri purifies the mind. It makes a man powerful and highly intelligent and eventually gives liberation or emancipation from the wheel of birth and death.
The mind is purified by constant worship. It is filled with good and pure thoughts. Repetition of worship strengthens the good samskaras. 'As a man thinks, that he becomes. This is the psychological law. The wiles ede ho trains himself to thinking good, holy thoughts, develops a tendency to think of good thoughts.
His character is moulded and transformed by continued good thoughts. When the mind thinks of the image of Gayatri during worship, the mental substance actually assumes the form of the image. The impression of the object is left in

the mind. This is called samskara. When the act is repeated very often the samskaras gain strength by repetition and a tendency or habit is formed in the mind.
He who entertains thoughts of divinity becomes transformed actually into the Divinity himself by constant thinking and meditation. His disposition is purified and divinised. The meditator and the meditated, the worshipper and the worshipped, the thinker and the thought, become one and the same. This is samadhi. This is the fruit of worship.

Gayatri Purascharana

The Gayatri mantra has twenty-four syllables. So, one gayatri purascharana constitutes the repetition or japa of 24 lakhs of times of gayatri mantra. There are various rules for purascharana. If you repeat 3,000 times daily, you should keep up the number daily all throughout till you finish the full 24 lakhs. Cleanse the mirror of the mind of its impurities and prepare the ground for the sowing of the spiritual seed. The Lord's grace is very very important.
The Maharashtrians are very fond of gayatri purascharana. In Poona and other places there are persons who have performed purascharana several times. Shree Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji was a votary of gayatri purascharana. The success in his life and the establishment of a grand Hindu University at Benares is all attributable to his gayatri japa and the benign grace of the blessed Mother Gayatri.
Swami Vidyaranya, the reputed author of the celebrated Panchadas, performed gayatri purascharana. Mother gave him darshan and granted him a boon. Swami Vidyaranaya asked: "O Mother! There is a great famine in the Deccan. Let there be a shower of gold to relieve the immense distress of the people." Acordingly, there was shower of gold. Such is the power of shakti of gayatri mantra.
Yoga-bhrashtas those who have practised yoga in a previous Siland pure minded persons hav, can have darshan of Gayatri by doing one purascharana only. As the minds of vast majority of persons in this age are filled with various sorts of impurities, one has to do more than one purascharana according to the degree of impurity of the mind. The more the impurities, the

greater the number of purascharana. (The famous Madhusudana Swami did seventeen purascharanas of Krishna mantra. He did not get darshan of Lord Krishna on account of the sins committed in killing 17 brahmins in his previous births. But he had darshan of the Lord when he was half-way through the eighteenth purascharana. The same rule applies to gayatri-purascharana also.)

Hints on Gayatri Japa

1. In days of yore, Hindu ladies also used to wear sacred thread and repeat gayatri. (Manu was not in favour of this.)
2. After the purascharana is over, perform havan and feed brahmins, sadhus and poor people to propitiate the Goddess.
3. Those who wish to do purascharana may live on milk and fruits.
This makes the mind sattvic. One will derive great spiritual benefits.
4. There are no restrictions of any kind when you repeat a mantra for attaining moksha without motive. Restrictions come in only when you want to get some fruits, when you do the japa with
expectation.
5. When a purascharana of gayatri is done on the banks of the Ganges underneath an asvattha tree, mantra-siddhi comes in rapidly.
6. If you repeat gayatri 4,000 times daily you can finish the purascharana in one year, seven months and twenty-five days. If you do the japa slowly it will take 10 hours to finish 4,000 daily. The same number should be repeated daily.
7. You must observe strict brahmacharya when you do purascharana. Then you can have darshan of Gayatri easily. Those who are unable to practise strict celibacy should be very moderate in copulation. This is the second best thing.
8. The practice of akandha mauna (unbroken silence) during purascharana is highly beneficial. Those who are not able to practise this can observe full mauna for a week in a month or on Sundays,
9. Those who practise purascharana should not get up from the asana till they finish the fixed number. They should not change the pose also.

10. Counting can be done through mala, fingers or watch. Count the exact number that you can do in one hour. Suppose that in one hour you can do 400 gayatri mantras. Then japa for 10 hours means 10 x
400 = 4,000. There is more concentration in counting with a watch.
11. There are three varieties of Gayatri pictures for meditation in the morning, noon and evening. Many meditate on the five-faced Gayatri only throughout the day.
The repetition of gayatri japa brings the darshan of Gayatri and eventually leads to the realisation of the advaitic Brahman or unity of consciousness, or oneness; and the aspirant who asked for light from Gayatri, in the beginning, sings now in exuberant joy, "I am That Light of Lights, that gives light to the buddhi."
May Gayatri, the Blessed Mother of the Vedas, bestow on us right understanding, pure intellect, right conduct and right thinking. May She guide us in all our actions and deliver us from the samsaric wheel of birth and death. Glory unto Gayatri, the creatress, the generatrix of this universe!

SCIENCE OF WORKSHIP

Man does not get full satisfaction from sensual pleasures. He always feels that he is in want of something. He is restless and discontented. Then he longs to come into conscious communion with the Lord of the universe and to attain immortality and everlasting peace. This ultimate craving of a man finds its satisfaction in worship. The individual soul desires to unite himself with his father, the supreme Soul. This is done through worship.
Love and devotion naturally rise in his heart when he hears the glory and greatness of the Lord. An object of worship is therefore necessary for man to pour forth his love and devotion. Worship helps spiritual evolution and eventually brings the devotee face to face with God. As the Absolute or Infinite cannot be comprehended by the limited and finite mind, the conception of the impersonal God in His lower, limited form came into existence. The nirguna

Brahman (God without attributes) assumes forms for the pious worship of the devotees.

Worship is the effort on the part of he who worships to reach the proximity or presence of God or the supreme Self. It consists of all those observances and practices — physical and mental - by which the aspirant makes a steady progress in the realm of spirituality, and eventually realises in himself, in his own heart, the presence of Godhead.

Worship is the expression of love and devotion by the devotee to the Lord, of extreme reverence towards Him, of keen longing to be in conscious communion with Him, of eager aspiration to be always at His feet and of intense craving to be united with Him. The devotee feels the pangs of his separation from the Lord, sheds profuse tears and sings His praise, glory, splendour and greatness.

Worship may take the form of prayer, praise, meditation or kirtan.

Worship differs according to the growth and evolution of the individual. There is nature worship. Parsees worship the element fire. Hindus worship the Ganges, cows, peepul tree, etc. In the Vedas there are hymns to Indra, Varuna, Agni, Vayu. This is nature worship. There is hero-worship. Great heroes like Sivaji and Napoleon are worshipped even now. In hero-worship the individual imbibes the virtues of the person whom he worships. Birthday celebrations of great persons and anniversary celebrations are forms of worship. Then there is relic-worship. Hairs and bones of departed souls are also worshipped. Then there is the pitru-worship, or worship of fore-fathers. There is worship of gurus, rishis and
devatas

Meditation is mental worship of the Lord; singing the Lord's names or kirtan is vocal worship; service of living beings with love and a divine attitude is physical worship.

As man evolves, he passes from one stage of worship to another.

The lower stages drop by themselves. A man of higher stage should not condemn his brother who is in a lower stage. One should not forget the underlying, indwelling, interpenetrating, one Essence or Intelligence when he does the worship of any kind.

The fundamental object in worship is union with the Lord who pervades or permeates all these names and forms, by developing Intense love. Ishvara has different aspects or forms such as Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Rama, Krishna, Ganapathy, Kartikeya, Durga, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Indra, Agni — but in whatever the name and form, it is Ishvara who is adored. The Lord in the form is worshipped; the devotion goes to the Lord. All are worshipping the one basic.
Reality, Ishvara. The
differences are only differences in names and forms on account of differences in the worshippers. Worship of Lord Jesus or Lord Mohammed or Sri Guru Nanak or Lord Buddha or Lord Mahavira is really worship of Ishvara only. These are all forms. "However side proach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the paths men take from every side are mine, O Partha." Bhagavad Gita (IV -Il): "Any devolee who seeks to worship with faith any such aspect, I verly bestow the unswerving faith of that man." Bhagavad Gita (VII-21).
The term 'sadhana' comes from the root 'sadh', which means 'to exert', 'to endeavour to get a particular result or siddhi. He who makes the attempt is called a sadhaka. If he achieves the desired result — siddhi — he is called a siddha. A fully developed siddha is one who has attained full knowledge of Brahman. Self-realisation or darshan of God is not possible without sadhana. Any spiritual practice is called sadhana. Sadhana and abhyasa are synonymous terms. That which is obtained through sadhana is Sadhya (God or Brahman).

Bhajan

Bhajan is the worship of God. God is Truth. God is Love. God is Light. God is Peace. God, Love, Peace, Truth, Knowledge, Bliss and Existence are synonmyous terms. That secondless Supreme Being who resides in the inner chambers of your heart as the Inner Ruler, who has no beginning, middle and end, who is all-pervading, who is unchanging, who exists in the past, present and future, who is self-existent, who is independent and who is self-luminous, is God. Bhajan is meditation on God. Bhajan is worship. In short, all contrivances or methods that are calculated to bring the devotee face to face

with God, are bhajan. Japa (repetition of His name), sankirtan (singing His name either alone or with a party), prayer etc., constitute bhajan.
Life without bhajan of some sort or other is absolutely useless, my dear friends. Life without worship is dreary and cheerless. It is mere burden only on this earth. Just as zero is nothing without one in the beginning, so also this life is practically nothing withour bhajan, although you possess in abundance all the objects of this world. This world is a long dream, full of pains and miseries. The only real entity. is God.
All religionists do their own bhajan in their own way. The goal is the same, but the paths are different. Essentials are the same in all religions, but non-essentials are different. Ignorant, petty-minded people fight over non-essentials and neglect the very core or essence of religion. Why do you count the leaves in vain? Eat the mangoes chactly. Every religion demands from the aspirant purity, good character, mercy towards all creatures, brotherly love, speakins truth and attaining God-consciousness.
There are rituals for beginners in the path of devotion. When the devotee advances, when his mind is totally absorbed in his object of worship there is no use in waving of lights, offering sandal paste, ringing bells, etc. The whole cosmos is Brindavan for him. What a glorious state of devotion it is! The devotee gets para-bhakti, or supreme devotion. All rituals drop by themselves for such an exalted bhakta. But rituals are of great help for beginners in developing bhakti. They should not be ignored on any score.
Even trees, brooks, rivers, ocean, the gentle breeze, sun, moon and stars, birds, etc., are doing bhajan silently. They are repeating His name. Rivers repeat bhum, bhum. Breeze utters OM OM OM.
Waves of the ocean repeat Hari Om or Soham. The sound of Hari Om comes out of the mouth of every bird. Even railway trains, engines or factories repeat Hari Om Tat Sat. Mark this very carefully
The objects of doing worship or bhajan are to attain infinite eternal peace, immortality and freedom from the wheel of birth and death with its concommitant evils of disease, old age, sins and miseries of all sorts. There is no iota of happiness in this world and its objects. It is all imaginary, illusory, nerve-irritation. The inner mind is a blazing furnace. Worship destroys the three kinds of pain caused by oneself, other beings and acts of God, eradicates

the knots of ignorance and annihilates the five afflictions and the three defects of the mind. It takes the devotee to Brahman. The bhakta enjoys all divine wealth and drinks the nectar of immortality. He enjoys being on the same plane as God, being near to Him, having His form and becoming one with Him. Now dear friends, stand up, gird up the loins, be sincere and true. Sing His name always; remember his name; feel His presence everywhere in every face. Realise Him — this is your highest duty.
Meditate on Him, purify your heart by serving humanity without expectation of fruits, and by seeing the Lord in all. Love all, be kind to all. Prevent the senses from revolting. Speak the truth; develop humility, forgiveness, patience, the spirit of service and self-sacrifice. Practise celibacy. The Lord is quite close to you in your heart; He is ever ready to embrace you. Live in Him. This is the essence and the fruits of worship. Become a yogi, a Inani or a bhagavata. May the divine splendour shine in your face forever. May the divine harmony fill your heart and whole being.

Five Classes of Worship

Rishis of yore have prescribed five classes of worship according to the predominating element in a man or woman. They are worship of Sri Ganesha, Lord Siva, Lord Hari, Shakti and Surya. If the earth element is predominant, one should worship Sri Ganesha; if the water element is predominant, one should worship Hari; if the fire element is predominant, one should worship Surya; if the air element is predominant, one should worship Shakti; and if the space element is predominant, one should worship Lord Siva.

Five Kinds of Worship

There is another classification according to the capacity of the individual. Some worship elementals and lower spirits. These worshippers are ignorant people. Some worship pitris (forefathers) and rishis and celestials. Some worship avataras such as Lord Krishna and Rama. Some worship saguna Brahman (God with attributes). Advanced students worship the formless,

attributeless, unmanifest satchidananda Brahman of the Upanishads. These are the five kinds of worship.

Importance of Worship

You will find in the Bhagavad Gita: "But by devotion to Me alone I may thus be perceived, O Arjuna, and known and seen in essence, and entered, O Parantapa." (XI-54).

He who leads a mere outward sensual life without doing any worship is an animal only, though he wears outwardly the form of a human being. Eating, drinking, sleeping, fear and copulation, etc. are common in brutes and human beings; but that which makes one a real man or a God-man is worship. Worship transmutes a man into blessed divinity. Of all those things which are conducive to spiritual advancement and the acquisition of virtues, worship is one which is not only indispensably requisite but eminently beneficial to all classes of people. It is easy too. If the giver does not have faith, charity does not attain fullness and he will not get the maximum benefits. All gifts which are inspired by the fever of worship and the love of God are really pure (sattvic). In austerity, sacrifice and kirtan, the cumulative powers of faith, love of God and keen longing for divine illumination produce full sattvic benefits or fruits.

Patanjali Maharishi emphasises the importance of worship in various places in his Raja Yoga Sutras. For even a raja yogi, worship is necessary. He has his own Ishtam or guiding deity. Self-surrender to God is a limb of raja yoga niyama and kriya.

Man sows an action or thought and reaps a habit of doing or thinking. He sows a habit and reaps a character. He sows a character and reaps a destiny. Habit is second nature - or rather first nature itself. Man has made his own destiny by thinking and acting. He can change his destiny. He is the master of his own destiny, there is no doubt of this. By right thinking and enquiry and strong self-effort he can become master of his destiny. Markandeya changed his destiny through austerity and worship of Lord Siva. Visvamitra became a Brahmarishi through vigorous austerities. You can also do so, if you have a strong will and iron determination. Vasistha preaches self-effort to Sri Rama

in Yoga Vasistha, Savitri changed the destiny of her husband Satyavan through the power she obtained through following the rules of a chaste wife (pativrata-dharma). Just as you can change your way of writing in a slanting manner into a vertical manner, so also you can change your destiny by changing your mode of thinking. Now you are thinking, "I am Mr. So-and-So," because you identify with the body and other limiting adjuncts. Now start the anti-current. Think: "I am Brahman. I am the immortal Self in all.
I am all-pervading light, intelligence or pure consciousness." Your destiny will be changed. Just as you think, so you will become. This is the sadhana. This is vedantic meditation. Practice it steadily. Feel and realise.

Four Kinds of Bhavas

There are four kinds of worship, corresponding to four different slates and dispositions of the seeker himself. The realisation that the Supreme Spirit (Paramatma) and the individual spirit (jivatma) are one, that everything is Brahman and nothing but Brahman (the Everlasting being), is the highest state (Brahma bhava). Constant mediation — with yoga processes — upon the Lord in the heart, is the lower form (dhyana bhava). Lower still is that bhava of which Japa recitation of mantra and hymns of praise are the expression, and lowest of all is external worship (puja).
Puja bhava is that which arises out of the dualistic notions of worshipper and worshipped, the servant and the Lord; a dualism which necessarily exists in greater or lesser degree until monistic experience is attained. He who realises the truth of advaita or non-dualism knows that all is Brahman. For him there is neither worshipper nor worshipped, neither yoga nor puja, neither meditation, japa, vows nor other rituals. He is a siddha (perfect sage in its fullest sense); that is, he has attained siddhi (perfection) which is the aim of sadhana.

Worship With Form and Without Form

Upasana means worship. It literally means to sit near God. Upasana is a broad term which includes many forms of worship - meditation, japa, daily morning ablutions, prayer, repeating verses in praise of God, etc. It is of two kinds, viz: meditation on God without form and meditation on Ishvara (with form and attributes). Upasana is again either gross or subtle according to the nature of the seeker, his degree of competency, or advancement in the path. He who worships a murthi, rings bells and offers sandal-paste, flowers, etc. does gross form of worship, whereas he who visualises the image of his Ishtam, meditates on it and offers mental offerings (manasic puja) does subtle form of worhsip. Hearing of the stories and glories of the Lord, kirtan (singing His names), constant remembrance of the Lord, service of His feet, offering flowers, prostration, prayer, chanting of mantra, self-surrender, service of devotees, service of humanity and country with Narayana bhav (seeing the Lord in all) etc., constitute worship of a form (saguna upasana).

Service of humanity and country and mental japa of Om with the feeling that everything is the Self (Atma bhav), chanting of Om and meditation on Soham or Sivoham or on the mahavakyas such as

'Aham Brahma asmi' or "Tat tvam asi' after sublating the illusory vehicles through 'Neti neti' ("Not this, not this') doctrine, constitute worship without form (nirguna upasana).

pasana changes the mental substance, destroys rajas of periesness and tamas or dullness, and fills the mind with sattva of purity. Upasana destroys subtle desires, cravings, egoism, lust, hatred, anger, etc. It turns the mind inward and eventually bring' the devotee face to face with the Lord, frees him from the wheel of births and deaths and confers on him immortality and freedom.

The mind becomes that on which it meditates (in accordance with the analogy of the wasp and the caterpillar). There is a mysterious or inscrutable power in upasana which makes the meditator and the meditated identical.

Saguna upasana is bhakti yoga or the yoga of devotion.

Nirguna upasana is jnana yoga or the yoga of knowledge. In jnana yoga or the path of vedanta, the aspirant acquires the four means of liberation, viz. viveka (discrimination); vairagya (indifference to sensual enjoyments herein and hereafter); shatsampat (sixfold wealth) — sama (tranquillity of mind), dama

(restraint of the senses), uparati (renunciation), titiksha (power of endurance), sraddha (faith in the words of guru or spiritual preceptor, and in the srutis or revealed scriptures of the Hindus, viz. Upanishads) and samadhana (balance of mind or one-pointedness of mind) - and mumukshutva keen longing for liberation or deliverance from the round of births and deaths). Then he approaches a guru who has realised the Supreme Self and hears the scriptures from him. Then he reflects and meditates on the Self or Atman, and eventually attains direct realisation of the Self.

Saguna Brahman is with limiting adjunct (maya) and nirguna Brahman is without any limiting adjunct. He is free from maya. Saguna Brahman is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent; saguna Brahman is Ishvara. Nirguna Brahman assumes the form of saguna Brahman for His sport (lila) and for the pious worship of devotees.

Nirguna Brahman represents the sun; saguna Brahman represents the rays of the sun. Just as water exists in the unmanifested state in the form of vapour, so also the nirguna Brahman exists in an unmanifested state. Vapour, water and ice, are one. So also saguna Brahman and nirguna Brahman are one.

The imperishable Brahman is the Unmanifest. He is incomprehensible to the senses. He is destitute of all limiting adjuncts. That which is visible to the senses is called the manifested. The unmanifested transcendental Brahman is beyond all limitations. he is beyond time, space and causation. He is eternal and indefinable. He cannot be defined because He is beyond the reach of mind and speech. Because He is unmanifested He has not got the four dharmas, viz., jati (caste — such as brahmin, etc.) ; guna walk as blue, white, etc.); kriya — such as he who reads, he who waks, etc.) and sambandha (relationship — such as father and son). He is unthinkable, because He is the Unmanifest. Whatever is visible to the senses and can be grasped by the organs of knowledge can be thought of by the mind also.

Worshippers of saguna (the qualified) and nirguna Brahman (the unqualified) reach the same goal. But the latter path is very hard, because the aspirant has to give up attachment to the body from the very beginning of his spiritual practice. It is very hard for those who are attached to their bodies to reach the Imperishable Further, it is extremely difficult to fix the mind on the formless and attributeless Brahman.

Contemplation on nirguna Brahman demands a very sharp, one-pointed and subtle intellect. The scriptures say: "The Atman is hidden in all beings and does not shine forth, but it is seen by subtle seers through their sharp and subtle intellect."
He who realises the nirguna Brahman attains eternal bliss, Self-realisation or kaivalya (liberation),
which is preceded by the
destruction of nescience (avidya) with its effects.
He who realises saguna Brahman goes to Brahmaloka and enjoys all the wealth of the Lord. He then gets initiation into the mysteries of kaivalya from Hiranyagarbha. Without any effort and without the practice of vedantic sravana, manana and nididhyasana (hearing of the scriptures, reflection on their meaning and deep meditation) through the grace of the Lord he attains kaivalya moksha, the same state attained by vedantins. Through the knowledge of the Self, nescience with its effects is destroyed in the case of the saguna worshipper, also.

Philosophy of Pratima

Pratima (idol or image) is a substitute or symbol. For a beginner an image is an absolute necessity. By worshipping an idol, Ishvara is pleased. The idol remains an idol, but the worship goes to the Lord. Just as a man is pleased by shaking hands with his friend, by touching a small portion of his body, so also God is pleased when a small portion of His Virat (cosmic body) is worshipped. Just as the child develops the maternal feeling by playing with its imaginary toy-child made up of rags, and suckling it in an imaginary manner, so also the devotee develops the feeling of devotion by worshipping the idol and by concentrating upon it. Pictures, drawings, etc, are a form of pratima.
A reputed businessman of New York came to me one evening for an interview. During the course of conversation he said:
"Swamiji, I have no faith in image-worship. It is all foolishness." His private secretary who was also with him had a photo of the man in his pocket-diary. I took the photo and asked the private secretary to spit on it. The secretary was struck aghast. He hesitated and looked at the baron. I again commanded him:

"Go on, spit at the picture. Quickly." The secretary said: Swamiji, this man is my master. I serve him. How can I spit at the picture? This is his image.
I cannot do this ignoble act. I respect him in this picture." I said to him: "This is only a paper. This is not the real man. It cannot talk, move or eat." Then the secretary said: "Anyhow I can see my master in this picture. This mean act would affect my feelings as well as the feelings of my master. I cannot spit." I said to the businessman: "Look here, my friend! Your secretary loves and respects your photo. He associates your presence with the picture, although it is just a bit of paper. Is this not image-worship? Even so the devotee associates the attributes of God with the image and feels His presence or immanence there. He finds it easy to concentrate his mind on the image. The mind wants a concrete prop to lean upon in the beginning stage of practice. Do you see the point now, my dear friend?" He replied: "Revered Swamiji! You are quite right. My eyes are opened now. I am quite convinced. Pray, pardon me.
To the worshipper who believes that the symbol - any kind of image - is the body of the Lord in the form of stone, clay, brass, picture, etc., such worship can never be idolatry. All matter is a manifestation of God. God is present in everything which exists.
Everything is an object of worship, for all is a manifestation of God who is therein worshipped. The very act of worship implies that the Object of worship is superior and conscious, for all is a manifestation of God who is therein worshipped. This way of looking at things must be attained by the devotee. The untutored mind must be trained to view things in the above manner.
The vast bulk of humanity are either of impure or weak mind, therefore for them the object of worship must be pure and the objects murthi, sun, fire, water, Ganges, saligram, lingam, are all symbols ord pd which help the aspiranes, saliam ipointedness of mind and purity of heart. But a higher advanced seeker who has a pure
mind and who sees the divine presence everywhere and in everything, can worship any kind of object.
Whilst all things may be the object of worship, choice is naturally made of those objects which, by reason of their effect on the mind, are more fitted for it. An image or one of the usual emblems is likely to raise in the mind of the

worshipper the thought of a Devata. It casily induces concentration of mind. Everybody has got predilection for a particular symbol, emblem or image. These are all personal inclinations in the worshipper due to his belief in their special efficacy for him. Psychologically, all this means that a particular mind finds that it works best in the direction desired by means of particular instruments or emblems or images.

A symbol is absolutely indispensable for fixing the mind. The Christians have got the cross. A gross mind needs a concrete symbol as a prop, a subtle mind requires an abstract symbol. Even a vedantin has the symbol OM for fixing the wandering mind. In the beginning, concentration or meditation is not possible without a symbol. The mind is disciplined in the beginning by fixing it on a concrete object or symbol. When it is rendered steady and subtle, it can be fixed on an abstract idea such as 'Aham Brahmasmi' (I am Brahman).

Idol Worship

For a bhakta or sage there is no such thing as insentient matter.Everything is God or consciousness. The devotee actually beholds the Lord in the idol. Narsi Mehta was put to the test by a rajah. The rajah said, "O Narsi! If you are a sincere devotee of Lord Krishna Himself, let this idol move." According to the prayer of Narsi Mehta, the idol moved. The sacred bull Nandi before Siva's idol took the food offered by Tulsidas. The idol played with Mirabai. It was full of life and consciousness for her.

How sublime is Hindu philosophy and Hindu mode of worship!

It does not end with worship of idol alone. The seeker is taken step by step to higher stages of devotion and samadhi (or communion), through the worship of the idol. Though he worships the idol, he has to keep before his mental eye the all-pervading Lord. He has to feel His presence in his heart and all objects also. The ways and rules of worship, and the secrets of worship that are described in the Hindu scriptures, are scientifically accurate and highly rational. Ir is only ignorant people who have not studied the scriptures and who have not associated with the devotees and great souls, who vilify worship of idols or murthis.

The aspirant who worships the idol in the beginning beholds the Lord everywhere and develops para bhakti. Later he beholds the whole world as the Lord. The form melts in the formless and becomes one with the formless essence. The ideas of good and bad, right and wrong, etc., vanish. He sees the Lord in all things: dacoit, cobra, scorpion, ant, dog, tree, log of wood, block of stone, sun, moon, stars, fire, water, earth, etc. His vision or experience baffles description. Glory to such exalted bhaktas who are veritable gods on earth, who live to lift others from the quagmire of samsara and save them from the clutches of death.

Tulsidas realised the all-pervading essence. He had cosmic consciousness. He communed with the all-pervading formless Lord, and yet his passion for Lord Rama with bow in hand did not vanish.

When he had been to Brindavan and saw the murthi of Lord Krishna with flute in His hands, he said, "I will not bow my head before this form." At once Lord Krishna's form assumed the form of Lord Rama. Then only he bowed his head. Tukaram also had the same cosmic experience as that of Tulsidas. He sang, "I see my Lord all-pervading just as sweetness pervades the sugar cane" and yet he always speaks of his Lord Vittala of Pandharpur. Mira also realised her identity with the all-pervading Krishna and yet she was not tired of repeating again and again "My Giridhar Nagar" Madhusudana

Swami, who had advaitic (non-dual) realisation, who beheld oneness of the Self, who had awareness of non-dual consciousness, was intensely attached to the form of Lord Krishna with flute in His hands.

From the above facts we can clearly infer that one can realise God through worship of murthi or idol, that the worship of the Lord in saguna form is a great aid for vedantic realisation also and for the realisation of the Lord in His all-pervading formless aspect, that the worship of the murthi is very essential for the purpose of concentration and meditation in the beginning, and that such a worship is not in any way a hindrance to the attainment of God-consciousness. Those who vehemently attack murthi puja are groping in extreme darkness and ignorance. They have no real knowledge of puja and worship. They enter into unnecessary, vain debates and discussion against murthi puja to show that they are learned persons, but they have not done any real sadhana at all They are persons who have made idle talking and tall talk

their habit and profession. They have ruined themselves and unsettled the minds of countless persons and ruined them also. The whole world worships symbols and murthis only, in some form or other.
Empty vessels only make sound. A practical man who does meditation and worship, who is full of knowledge and real devotion, always keeps silent. He influences and teaches others through silence. Only he knows whether a murth is necessary in the beginning or not.
However intellectual one may be, he cannot concentrate without the help of some symbol in the beginning. An intellectual and learned person on account of his pride and vanity only, says "I do not like a murthi. I do not wish to concentrate on a form." He cannot concentrate on That which is formless. He thinks that people will laugh at him when they come to know that he is meditating on a form. He simply talks and argues and poses. He wastes his life in unnecessary discussions only. An ounce of practice is better than tons of theories. Intellect is a hindrance in the vast majority of intellectual persons. They say that the existence of Brahman is a guess-work, samadhi is a bluff of the mind and Self-realisation is an imagination of the vedantins. Deluded souls! They are steeped in ignorance. They are carried away by their secular knowledge which is a mere husk when compared to the knowledge of the Self. There is no hope of salvation for such people. Their wrong samskaras should be flushed out by good samskaras attained through satsang - then only will they realise their mistakes. May the Lord bestow on them clear understanding and thirst for real knowledge.

Hindu Symbols

Bells are rung in temples and while doing puja, to shut out the external sounds and to make the mind inward and concentrated.
Lights are waved before the deity. This denotes that the Lord is all-light. The devotee says, "O Lord! Thou art the self-effulgent light of the universe. Thou art the light in the sun, moon and fire.
Remove the darkness in me by bestowing your divine light. May my intellect be illumined." This is the significance of waving lights.

Incense is burnt before the deity. The smoke spreads through the whole room. It acts as a disinfectant. Burning of incense denotes that the Lord is all-pervading, that He fills the whole universe by His living presence. It is to remind us of this fact that incense is burnt.
The devotee prays "O Lord! Let the desires and tendencies dormant in me vanish like the smoke of this incense, and become ashes. Let me become stainless."'
Burning of camphor denotes that the individual ego melts like the camphor, and the jiva becomes one with the supreme Light of lights.
When sandalwood is ground into a paste, it reminds the devotee that he should, in his difficulties, be as patient as the sandalwood.
Sandalwood emanates sweet odour when it is made into a paste. So also the devotee should not murmur when difficulties arise, but on the other hand should remain cheerful and happy and emanate sweetness and gentleness like the sandalwood. He should not hate nor wish evil even to his enemy.

Puja

Puja is the common term for ritual worship of which there are numerous synonyms — such as archana, vandana, bhajan, etc. — though some of these stress certain aspects of it. The object of worship is the Ishta Devata or guiding deity, or the particular form of the deity whom the devotee worships - such as Vishnu as such, or His forms as Rama and Krishna in the case of Vaishnavites, Siva in the eight forms in the case of Shaivites, or Devi in the case of Shaktas. The puja is vedic, tantric or mixed as is suitable to the devotee. One may choose any method according to his liking.
An object is used in the outer puja. It can be an image, a picture or an emblem (such as a saligram in the case of Vishnu worship, or lingam in the case of worship of Siva). Mantras are recited; water is poured over the image; flowers are offered; sandal-paste is applied; food and water are offered and camphor and incense are burnt. The devotee pours forth his love and devotion to the Lord who is hidden in the picture or image.

The image should be rubbed with oil, cleaned, adorned and given all such loving treatment which one would give to his most beloved and dearest being in the world.
The materials used or acts done in puja are known as upachara. They are sixteen in number — asana (offering seat for the image), svagata (welcoming the devata), padya (water for washing the feet), arghya (water offering made in the vessel), achamana (water for sipping), madhuparka (a mixture of honey, shee, milk and curd), snanam (water for bathing), vasthra (cloth or garment), abhushana (jewels), gandha (perfume), pushpa (flowers), dhoop (incense), dipa (lights), naivedya (food), tambulam (betels, nuts etc.), vandana or namaskara (prayers).
The devotee invokes the Deity into the image by what is called the welcoming (avahana) and life-giving (prana-pratishtha) ceremonies. When the worship is over, he bids the Deity depart.
This is called visarjana.

Practice of Puja

Take bath in the morning. Perform your daily prayer. If there is an idol of the devata it is good; otherwise, worship can be done on the floor itself, after cleaning the place and drawing a mandala there.
Collect flowers, scented incense sticks, sandal paste, oil lamp, camphor, fresh water, food-offerings for the Lord, a clean seat to sit on, a small bell and conch and cymbals if available.
Keep everything ready beforehand. You should not get up in the middle of the puja for collecting anything. As many mantras and prayers as possible should be repeated to kindle divine emotion. You should decorate the Lord with fresh clothes and garlands made of flowers. Adore Him with ornaments, flowers, scent, sandal paste, etc. Do it with intense love and devotion.
Offer to the Lord sweet cooked rice or some food that can conveniently be offered. Food specially prepared with ghee, milk etc., and with curd, vegetables and butter, are very much recommended.
Offer a prayer to the Lord with feeling of devotion. Offer flowers or rice soaked in water with kumkum to the Lord with his hundred and eight names,

or his root mantra repeated hundred and eight times. Offer abhisheka with fresh water, milk, ghee, honey or panchamrit (banana, ghee, honey, brown sugar and milk) as is convenient. If possible, offer flowers with the thousand names of God. Offer water, and burn camphor, etc. Mentally always think of the form of the Lord.

Let there be singing of the Lord's glories and chanting of His names. Offer prayers and surrender yourself to the Lord. Hear the stories of the Lord as recorded in the Bhagavatam and Ramayana etc. Say, "O, Lord! Have mercy on me. Be gracious unto me." Place your head on the Lord's feet and pray, "O Lord! protect me from the ocean of samsara with the shark of death in it. I am terribly afraid of it. I have taken shelter in Thee."

Offer prasad to others. Give money to the priest. If possible feed some poor people every day and give them clothing. Worship the poor as the Lord.

Do everything with the feeling that you are an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Have no selfish desires behind the worship you do. One important point is that he who does puja must abandon the idea of ownership of the articles of worship, etc., and must think that all the articles and wealth belong to Ishvara and he is only the caretaker. Then only will his worship bring the desired result.

Prostrations, offering etc., are outer worship. Meditation is the inner worship.

Manasic Puja

Manasic puja is doing worship of the Lord without any external materials. All materials necessary for puja are imagined in the mind and you feel that you are offering all of them to the Lord as in formal worship. This is only a feeling of what is otherwise done actually with hands. Feeling is more effective than action, for concentration is more in manasic puja than external puja.

Mentally feel all that you do in external worhsip. In the mind is the worship; in the mind is the incense; in the mind is sandal paste; in the mind is the flower, etc., offered to the Lord.

Manasic puja can be done by advanced students. Beginners should certainly do worship with flowers, sandal paste, incense, etc.

When you do manasic puja, mentally enthrone the Lord on a beautiful seat of honour, set with diamonds, pearls, emeralds, etc.
Offer Him a seat. Apply sandal paste to his forehead and body. Offer water, madhuparka and various sorts of flowers, clothes, etc. Burn incense, wave lights and burn camphor. Offer various kinds of fruits and sweetmeats. Offer to the Lord the fruits of the whole world. Do nor be miserly even in manasic puja. (In manasic puja one man once ofered only one stale plantain fruit and a handful of gram. A miserable, miserly man. Even in manasic puja he could not be very Senerous and liberal! This world abounds with such deplorable misers.) In the end mentally repeat:

Kayena vacha manasendriyairva
Buddhyatmana va prakritehsvabhavat
Karomi yadyat sakalam parasmai
Narayanayethi samarpayami

"Whatever action I do with the body, by speech, by the mind, by the senses, by the intellect or by my own nature, I offer all of them to the supreme Lord Narayana."

Also say **Om tat sat Brahmarpanamastu.** "I offer everything to the Absolute." This will purify your heart and remove the taint of expectation of reward. Manasic puja is more powerful than external puja with flowers, etc. Arjuna thought that Bhima was not doing any kind of worship.
He was proud of his external worship to Lord Siva. He offered bael leaves. But Bhima offered bael leaves to Lord Siva mentally. Arjuna once saw a large band of people carrying baskets of bael leaves. He thought within himself that these leaves must be those offered by him to Lord Siva, and he questioned them thus, "Brothers, wherefrom do you carry these bael leaves?" They replied "O Arjuna, these leaves are offered to our Lord Siva by Bhima, through his manasic puja." Arjuna was struck with wonder. He came to know that manasic puja was more powerful than the external worship, and that Bhima was a better devotee than he. His pride was destroyed. He became very humble.

Para Puja

Para Puja is the highest kind of worship, the worship of the jnanis. This is the effect of realisation of the Self. The devotee feels that he can do nothing but experience God only. He says: "O Lord!
How can I worship Thee who is without parts, who is Existence itself? How can I pray to Thee when Thou art my very being itself?
How can I offer water, etc., to Thee, when Thou art ever pure? How can I offer anything to Thee when Thou art ever one whose desires have all been fulfilled? Can I wave a candle to the sun and can ! bathe the ocean with a glass of water? How can I offer food to Thee when Thou art self-contented?"

In this way the devotee feels the infinite nature of God. Para puja is thus an illustration of impossibility of formal worship to God in consideration of His infinite and eternal nature full of knowledge and bliss. Para bhakti and para puja belong to the same stage. At this stage the devotee becomes one with God and loses his individuality.

Uddhava's Worship

Lord Krishna gives a description of worship to Uddhava in the eleventh chapter of Bhagavatam: "The sun, fire, earth or clay, water, a brahmin and any image of Mine in the concrete form, clearly thought as seated in the heart, may be worshipped in My name sincerely with such articles as could be obtained by him. This worship should be sincere and wholehearted and the devolee should imagine Me as his preceptor. He should begin My worship for obtaining My grace and not for any other desire. In ordinary images I should be invoked and released at every time of worship. I can be pictured in the mind.
The worship of My image in the heart should be with accessories pictured in the mind.
"The image should be washed or bathed, cleaned and adorned with ornaments and marks. The devotee must put My image facing north or east or must himself sit also facing east or north. He must sit facing Me or sideways.

(The devotee must be facing the north while the image faces the east.) He should repeat the mantras for purifying himself and clean his body by control of breath. He should sit quietly and meditate on Me for some time.
"He should think of Me as seated in a lotus with eight petals, overflowing with fragrance and radiant with light. The emblems — conch, chakra, mace, lotus, the ornament of kaustubha, the necklace and the mark or spot in the heart — should be imagined at the proper place and worshipped. Sandal-wood, saffron, camphor, kumkum and fragrance should be used. Purusha-suktam and other sacred literature should be repeated. My devotee may adorn Me with cloths, gems, sacred thread, sandal-paste, Rowers, saffron and ointments, elo.
The devole should give water for washing the feel, achamanam (sipping water Irom the palm of the hand), sandalwood paste and words of greeting, invitation and hospitality. He should also show fragrance, light and camphor at My altar. alat, reciting My various deeds and achievemans. He should seek My grace, frostating himself duly before Me. Putting his head on My fet, he should ask Jor My grace to protect him and save him from the whel of births and deaths. "He should adorn himself with the flowers and sandal used in such worship. The devotee may worship Me in any form, in all objects or in himself, in the manner that appeals most to his mind and inclinations, as I am immanent in all things. My devotee worshipping Me thus with rituals, mantras or both, attains not only bliss and self-realisation, but also all things he desires. By building temples and altars etc., devotees attain powers over all the worlds. By worship of Me they attain Brahma-loka. By all the acts, they attain My powers and immanence."

Prasad

Prasad is that which gives peace. During kirtan, worship, puja, havan and arati, almonds, sultanas, milk, sweets and fruits are offered to the Lord. Puja is done with bael leaves, flowers, tulsi and vibhuti (ash), and these are given as prasad from the Lord. They are charged with mysterious powers by the chanting of mantras during puja and havan.
Prasad is a great purifier, panacea and spiritual elixir. It is the grace of the Lord and an embodiment of shakti (power). Prasad is divinity in manifestation. Many sincere aspirants get wonderful experiences from prasad

alone. Many incurable diseases are cured. Prasad energises, vivifies, invigorates and infuses devotion. It should be taken with great faith. Those who are brought up in modern education and culture have forgotten all about the glory of prasad. This is a serious mistake.

Live for a week in Brindavan, Pandharpur or Benares. You will realise the glory and miraculous effects of prasad. Prasad bestows good health, long life, peace and prosperity to all. Glory to prasad, the bestower of peace and bliss. Glory to the Lord of the prasad, the giver of immortality and undying happiness.

'Vibhuti' is the prasad of Lord Siva. To be applied to the forehead. A small portion can be taken in.

'Kumkum' is the prasad of Sri Devi or Shakti. To be applied at the space between the eyebrows.

"Tulsi' is the prasad of Lord Vishnu, Rama or Krishna. To be taken in.

Almonds, sultanas, sweets, fruits etc. are given as prasad on all important religious functions.

Pearl Drops

Every aspirant in the spiritual path becomes a victim to the mood of depression in the beginning of the sadhana period. You will have to overcome this mood through discrimination, reflection, enquiry, prayer and singing the Lord's name vigorously, while sitting alone in your room with a melting heart. You may sing silently. This is an easy method to drive away this undesirable mood.

This mood is like a passing cloud. You should not be unnecessarily alarmed. It will pass off soon if you are vigilant.

Try to control wild outbursts of weeping. This is a weakness and negative state. But allow the pearl-drops of divine ecstasy to trickle down occasionally when you are in a profound prayerful mood or meditative state.

Shed the precious tears of divine love when you are alone, when you are in communion with the Lord. Do not weep in the presence of others. The rare pearl-drops of divine love are the outcome of melting of the heart by the fire of devotion and the fire of painful separation from the Lord.

Lord Hari is an ocean of mercy. He has boundless love for his devotees. He is a purifier of the sinful and the fallen. He accepted even Ajamila and that fallen woman Pingala. He drove the chariot of Arjuna in the battlefield. He ran to save Draupadi and Gajendra. Though He is the master of the three worlds, He is the slave of His devotees.

Open the doors of your heart. Let the lightning spark of love arise in your heart. Let the love pierce you through. Let your soul mix with the Supreme Soul. Let the heart sing to heart. Let the heart-lotus blossom and waft its sweet divine fragrance. Let the tears flow now on your cheeks and the divine ecstasy fill your whole being.

May Lord Narayana take you to His bosom and bathe you in the sacred waters of divine love and transcendental bliss!

Worship With Love

Worship God. Praise Him. Seek enlightenment and realise divine bliss.

Worship for worship's sake. Do not put any condition on God.

Worship God with the flowers of sacrifice, equal vision, serenity, truthfulness, compassion and love. People go here and there in thick forests, summits of hills, lakes and gardens, in search of flowers for offering to the Lord, and yet fail to attain the bliss supreme. They can easily get eternal bliss if they can offer to the Lord the single stainless flower of their heart.

God does not want precious presents. Many people spend millions of rupees on opening hospitals and dharamasalas (feeding houses), but they do not give their hearts.

Sadhaks bold! The Lord loves you even when you turn away from Him. How much more shall He love you, if you turn to Him again sincerely with faith and devotion! Very great is His love, greater than the greatest mountain. Very deep is His affection, deeper than the unfathomable depth of the ocean.

To Pseudo Para Bhaktas

An ignorant neophyte in the path of devotion says, "I practise para bhakti. There is no need for me to go to the temples and worship idols. What is there in worshipping idols, in offering flowers and waving lights?" He is labouring under a serious delusion. This is the state of those who proceed in the spiritual path without the advice or aid of the spiritual preceptor. They do whatever they like.

They follow the promptings of the lower mind and do not make any spiritual progress. They are also like the pseudo vedantic students.

It is very difficult to develop bhakti. Bhakti yoga is as difficult as vedanta or jnana yoga. The internal enemies - lust, greed, anger, hatred, egoism and jealousy - are very very powerful. They stand in the way of cultivating devotion.

The aspirant should pass through the various initial stages of bhakti yoga just as the student should go through matriculation, F.A. and B.A. before he sits in the M.A. class. He should visit temples and do puja. He should make garlands of flowers for the Lord and sweep the floor of the temple. He should bring water for abhisheka and clean the lights. He should light the lamps and ring the bells. All these should be done with faith, devotion and intense feeling. He should prostrate again and again before the Deity, and Some aspirants think that it is beneath their dignity to ring bells, clean lights, bring water and make garlands of flowers. think cheart isthe wong omenial servant. Such aspirants canno dream of developing bhakti even in thousands of births. They have not understood the alpha-beta of bhakti yoga.

Study the lives of the sixty-three Nayanars, the Tamil saint ed southern India. They were illiterate, but arey had intense and unswerving devotion to the Lord. They practised, day-in and day-out, the preliminary purificatory services in the temple and attained oneness with Siva through these practices alone.

If the aspirant falsely and foolishly imagines that he has attained the highest state of para bhakti and neglects to practise bhakti sadhana, his little devotion also will evaporate quickly. He will soon fall into the deep abyss of worldliness.

Be humble and simple. Think that you are only a very small student in the bhakti yoga class. Strengthen your aspiration. Be in the company of devotees

and protect yourself from temptations or worldly influences. Be ever vigilant. Only then can you grow in bhakti and only then will divine grace descend. False satisfaction and contentment is a serious obstacle in the spiritual path. Maya works in a variety of ways. It assumes various forms and deludes the aspirant in a variety of ways. When the aspirant has not reached even the second stage of bhakti, he falsely thinks that he is in the highest stage, para bhakti. This is maya. He gives up sadhana. Further progress is stopped by such false imagination. If he lives under a guru his defects will be pointed out, but he does not want to change. He has a false idea of independence.

His arrogance, self-assertive nature, self-sufficiency and vanity act as intoxicating veils and stumbling blocks. He himself does not know what he is really doing nor what his real position is.

He who has reached the stage of para bhakti will be absolutely fearless, desireless, angerless, I-less, mineless. He will be extremely humble and have no attachment for anything. He will be enjoying all divine powers and be in the possession of all virtues enumerated in the 12th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. He will be above body-consciousness.

If he does not possess all these marks or signs of a bhakta, but sumply says, "I am a para bhakta," do not believe him. He is a hypocrite. Put no value in his words. People shed false tears through habitual lachrymal irritation. These are not sincere tear drops of divine love of a devotee.

Sometimes man feigns to be a devotee and sheds false tears just 10 make his neighbours think that he is a great devotee, and on account of sympathetic actions his neighbours also begin to weep.

You will witness a nice scene of a band of weeping people in a tankitan gathering, bue scene of a band of went be an iota of devotion. May the Lord give them proper understanding.

Devotion is a very rare gift from God. Weeping is not by itself a criterion to judge the devotional nature of a man or a women. Do not mistake the crocodile tears of a hypocrite for the genuine pearl-drops of divine love which inspire and elevate the bystanders. One may not weep outwardly and yet he may be a genuine silent devotee.

May this earth be free from pseudo para bhakti aspirants. May the world abound with real, thirsty, sincere, humble devotees, who can charge everything with faith, devotion, joy and bliss.

KIRTAN

Mind is a peculiar combination of various kinds of moods, temperaments, whims and fancies. It is a strange mixture of the various sentiments, emotions etc., that are known of in this world.

Therefore the rishis of yore have designed various methods to control the mind. Control of the mind forms the most important and major item of spiritual sadhana in the path of God-realisation.

Bhakti yoga, and especially kirtan (one of the nine modes of bhakti), is the easiest, surest and quickest means of God-realisation. One can realise God through kirtan alone.

Kirtan is singing God's name with feeling (bhava), love (prem) and faith (sraddha), particularly singing Lord Krishna's names and stories. Singing about the Lord is usually known as bhajan in most parts of India. In sankirtan people join together and sing God's name collectively in a common place with accompaniment of musical instruments such as harmonium, violin, cymbals, mridanga (drum), etc. Christians sing hymns in the churches with piano. This is also sankirtan.

The sanskrit verb 'kirt' means praising. From this is derived 'kirtan'. Saint Tukaram of Maharashtra in one of his songs has charmingly said that as the purifying waters of the Ganges have come down to the mortal world from the Lord's feet, so the flow of kirtan comes out of the hearts of mortals and reaches the Lord's feet.

Kirtan is an easy way for attaining God-consciousness. At night all the members of the house should sit in a circle and do kirtan for one hour before the picture of Lord Krishna. The servants of the house also should be included. Sing any name of the Lord such as Siva, Hare Rama, Sita Ram, etc. in a chorus with one tune and beat harmoniously. You will forget the body and the world

and enter into an ecstatic state. Practise, try and feel it yourself. Mere tall talk will not do. Just as the intoxication that you get by taking a dose of opium lasts for some hours, the divine intoxication that you get from kirtan will last for some hours during the following day also. At night you will be free from bad dreams. During kirtan a special spiritual power comes from the Indweller of your heart and purifies the mind and heart. Sattva flows from the Lord to your mind just as oil flows from one vessel to another vessel. Kirtan gives you strength to face the difficulties in the battle of life. Singing the names of the Lord is a mental tonic.

Kirtan Purifies and Nourishes

If you ask a man, "Are you doing worship daily? Are you regular in doing japa, kirtan and meditation?" he gives the answer:
"My dear sir, what shall I do? I cannot get good rice or wheat flour, vegetables, ghee and milk now. The price of foodstuffs is considerably high. The foodstuffs are adulterated. I am starving. I am weak. I cannot do any worship or meditation." He puts the whole blame on food.
Food says: "Do not blame me, Sir. My condition entirely depends upon rain. There is no good rain these days. Hence the production of food is very little and meagre. You will have to blame the rain. If there is abundant rain there will be plenty of food." Rain says: "Do not blame me. My life depends upon Agni or fire. Refer the matter to Agni, who is my Lord."
Agni says: "Do not blame me. People do not perform sacrifices. A few people perform sacrifices in a half-hearted manner without sufficient ghee and other materials. Millions of people perform their own Agni-hotra (fire sacrifice) in their own way: they smoke cigars and cigarettes ceaselessly and pollute the atmosphere. There are even cigarette girls and cigarette boys. As soon as they get up from their bed they start 'Agni hotra' the first thing in the morning, and taint the air with their puffs of smoke. Horrible! Shameful! It is their first worship of the Lord. How can you expect good rain and good food? People are degenerated. No prayers, no recitation of gayath, no kirtan, no japa. They eat, drink, smoke, sleep. That is all. The day closes. Life ends. Refer the matter to

Vayu, or air, my Lord. I am born of Vayu only. If the atmosphere is rendered pure by sacrifice there will be good rain and abundant food."
Vayu says:
"You will have to refer the matter to Akasa, or
space, my Lord. I am born of Akasa. If Akasa is pure, I will also be pure and will direct Agni to bring forth abundant rain."
Akasa says: "Doubtless I am the source or womb for the four elements — air, fire, water and earth. I generate sound. People have polluted me by using horrible vulgar words. Even children utter foul words when they are playing. Parents teach them to use vulgar words. They are their gurus. Children imitate them. People do not do kirtan regularly. If all do kirtan daily the whole atmosphere will be purified. There will be abundant rain and abundant crops. In olden days there was kirtan in every house, and so there were good rains and good food. Even this little food on this carth is due to the kirtan done by some devotees. Had it not been for this the whole world would have perished by this time on account of severe famine.
If you really want peace and plenty, do kirtan, purify the atmosphere and propitiate Lord Hari. Sankirtan is the bestower of eternal bliss, immortality and abundant food which helps a man to do his worship, meditation and attain the goal of life."
O man! Do not pollute the atmosphere by uttering vulgar words and smoking. Utter always Sri Ram, Hari Om. Train your children aso in this direction. Do kirtan regularly in your house with your children and all members of the family and in the temple, maths and town halls, and enjoy the bliss of the Eternal.

Kirtan Yoga

Kirtan or sankirtan yoga is the easiest, surest, quickest, safest, cheapest and best way for attaining God-realisation in this age. Most people cannot practise severe austerities nowadays. They do not have the strength of will to practise hatha yoga. They cannor maintain perfect life-long celibacy. They do not have the pre-Trequisites for raja yoga. They are not endowed with the keen

intellect noctary for jinana oTher arent endowed with the keen inelen sit or he ga or singin or ve antic sahas is But this saekirt
There sininite shaki in the Lord's names. It will remove all impurities from your mind. Vedantins say that there are three kinds of obstacles to Self-realisation - impurity, restlessness and
ignorance. To remove them they prescribe selfless service, worship and meditation. Sankirtan alone can achieve all these together.
Kirtan removes the impurities of the mind, steadies it and checks its tendency to vacillate, and ultimately it tears the veil of ignorance and brings the sadhaka face to face with God. Kirtan will enable you to realise the Infinite here and now. Kirtan will save you from delusion.
Therefore sing the names of the Lord always.

How to Practise Kirtan

Generally kirtan is conducted in temples, houses, etc. Devotees join together at sunset in temples or they keep a photo of the Lord in a hall, decorate it with flowers etc., and seat themselves in front of the picture in two rows facing one another.
In the beginning Om is chanted loudly in chorus by all the devotees three times. Then Ganesha and guru kirtans are sung. One of the devotees sings the names of the Lord melodiously and others follow him next. This method ensures more attention, harmony and uniformity. This preliminary kirtan lasts for about five minutes.
Next the mahamantra or Kalisantarara Upanishad mantra:
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, is repeated for nearly 10 minutes. Then the turn comes for all other devotees to sing and lead the kirtan individually. They sing for a definite period. It is beneficial to keep 5 to 10 minutes as the minimum time. When all the devotees have sung kirtan, it is concluded with prayers for world peace and repetition of the shanti-mantra:
Purnamada purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate
Purnasya purnamadaya purnamevavasishyate.

In the end there should be common meditation for a few minutes. There should also be arati to the Lord's picture and distribution of the sacred prasad.

Variety of Kirtan

Kirtan yoga can be practised by sincere devotees and earnest sadhaks after God-realisation in a variety of ways. Just as we take delight in preparing various kinds of dishes out of one and the same vegetable and relish their tastes immensely in each of the preparations individually, even so devotees sing in ecstasy the blessed names of the Lord and enjoy unparallelled spiritual bliss.

People of different communities, localities and provinces conduct kirtan in their own usual and established manner. For example there is sankirtan prevalent in Latvia. In South India they have what is called 'divya nama kirtan' Maharashtrians, Bengalis,

Gujeratis, Biharis etc., have their own ways of conducting sankirtans in their districts.

Some of the most important and existing modes of kirtan are:

1. Akhanda kirtan
2. Prabhata kirtan
3. Prabhata pheri
4. Nagar kirtan
5. Boat kirtan
6. Lorry kirtan
7. Kirtan on elephant back
8. Party kirtan
9. Gunanuvad
10. Yas kirtan
11. Naradiya kirtan
12. Nam kirtan
13. Lila kirtan
14. Divya nama kirtan

Thus kirtan can be done in a variety of ways to suit the temperament, time and place. Sankirtan can be done without any restriction to its time and place. Not only bhaktas, but even vedantins can do sankirtan, chanting vedantic kirtans. The attributes of the nirguna (formless) Brahman are described by means of attractive kirtans.

Akhanda Kirtan - Unbroken Kirtan: Before starting akhanda kirtan, a ceremony called ardha-vasa is performed the previous night. A big stage is erected and decorated with mango leaves, howers etc. Then the picture of Lord Krishna or Lord Rama is placed on a special altar, which is also nicely decorated. Various pictures of Lord Krishna, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu etc. are also placed there.

The kirtan is done till midnight. In the end puja is done with recitation of verses in praise of the Lord, and arati. Then the Lord goes to sleep by the recitation of special mantras.

In the early morning, the priest comes and does puja. Four oil lights are placed in the four corners of the puja area. Then starts the kirtan. One person should repeat the mantra in a melodious sweet tune and all others should follow him in chorus. The sixteen names

"Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare; Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare," constitute one mantra.

You should not repeat or sing either "Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare"' or "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare' twice. For individual japa and kirtan the whole mantra should be repeated at a stretch. But during akhanda kirtan, in order to avoid too much strain and break, the first half of the mantra, viz. "Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare" should be repeated by the person who leads the kirtan, followed in chorus by the party. Then the other half should be repeated. No break in the kirtan should be caused between the time when the leader of the party ends the kirtan and the others following him in chorus, begin it. Some people cannot sing even half of the mantra without a break. They should train themselves to sing one half of the mantra without any break in the middle. Especially those who lead the kirtan should take particular care of this point; otherwise it cannot be akhanda kirtan. Thus the continuity of the kirtan can be maintained.

In akhanda kirtan you should not sing in a very high pitch. You will get tired soon. If you sing in a very low tone, the members will not take much interest. There will not be any enthusiasm and joy.
You will have to sing in a happy medium tone.
At the end of akhanda kirtan the devotees go for nagar-kirtan, singing the names of the Lord or the mahamantra in chorus. They come back and do the ceremony whereby curd mixed with water and sandal paste is sprinkled by special grass over the persons present.
The beautiful song "O Deyya mayya makhan khilade" is sung when the water is sprinkled.
Prabhata Kirtan: This is conducted in the early morning hours. The devotees leave their beds at 4 a.m., wash their face, teeth, etc., and also take a bath if convenient. They then sit for sankirtan. They keep the picture of their chosen deity in front of them and do kirtan as mentioned above. Before the starting of kirtan they repeat certain sacred hymns to Sadguru, Lord Vishnu, Sarasvati and others.
Prabhata Pheri: When prabhata kirtan is concluded the devotees start the prabhata pheri. Pheri means going round and prabhata pheri means going round in the morning doing sankirtan of God's name in a group. Generally prabhata pheri is conducted before sunrise. It is done as the first item of the programme in all spiritual congregations and assemblies like Kirtan Conferences, Sadhana Weeks, etc.
This serves to make the people know of the forthcoming congregation.
The philosophy behind prabhata pheri is this: the people of the locality who are not in the habit of getting up before sunrise will develop the habit of waking before sunrise in the brahmamuhurta.
They will hear the names of the Lord chanted as soon as they get up, which will purify the inner impurities of the mind. The effect of prabhata pheri kirtan is beyond description. It generates a divine current in the whole district or town. There will be peace, joy and ecstasy in the minds of all those who sing and hear.
Nagar Kirtan: This is generally done in the evening after 4 p.m., but it can be conducted in the morning also. Here the group of devotees start from a particular place with harmonium, cymbals and other instruments of music.

After Ganesh kirtan, guru kirtan and mahamantra kirtan, the devotees sing various other sankirtan. Nagar kirtan can be done without instruments also. This is more effective. The pure vibrations of the Lord's names will not be tainted by the instrumental sounds in the middle. The devotees go round the town and return to the place where they started and do arati to the Lord with great zeal.

Nagar kirtan is conducted on full moon, the 11th lunar day and other days sacred to the devotees — like Ramanavami, Janmashtami, Sivaratri, etc. In South India, nagar kirtan is conducted in many places at night with grand illumination. In the month of December it is conducted daily in brahmamuhurta. This is sacred to the bhaktas. The months of margasirsha (November and December) are very sacred according to the Bhagavad Gita, in which Lord Krishna says, "Among months I am margasirsha."

Boat Kirtan: This is done in places like Hardwar, Rishikesh, Brindavan, Ayodhya, etc., where there are sacred rivers. Devotees sit in a boat with a nicely decorated picture of the Lord kept in the centre. The kirtan begins and the boat moves slowly from place to place. Sometimes the devotees spend 12 hours or 24 hours on the river doing kirtan. In Rishikesh, boat kirtan is conducted during Sadhana Weeks. Sometimes the kirtan continues for three days. The spiritual benefit derived through a boat kirtan is beyond description. Even atheists will have faith in God if they do boat kirtan. Pilgrims while crossing the Ganges during mela times and on ordinary days also, to or from Ananda Kutir, sing the Lord's names in sweet tunes. This fills the air with pure spiritual vibration at all times.

Lorry Kirtan: The best and most potent way to disseminate the knowledge of bhakti and sankirtan is through lorry kirtan. It helps propagate sankirtan very much. This is the easiest and quickest means of spreading sankirtan in all places. Here the party of kirtanists move in motor lorry from place to place.

Kirtan on Elephant Back: This method of kirtan is prevalent in U.P. more than any other place. The picture of the Lord is well decorated and mounted on an elephant's back. Some devotees sit on the elephant. A huge party of sankirtanists with cymbals etc., accompany the elephant, all the while singing the names of the Lord in chorus. The names of the Lord are written on big cloths or paper, or inscribed on metal plates which the devotees hold aloft as

they walk before the procession. Spiritual teachings and laconic sayings of the Vedas and of saints and rishis are also written on boards and exhibited to the public during melas and religious fairs. They produce deep and indelible impressions in the minds of those who happen to see them. But what do you usually find in these days?

There is much noise and fuss everywhere. You see pompous advertisements of 'Dongre's Balamrit,' and "Melin's Food, ' etc. It is really lamentable indeed.

Party Kirtan: The devotees arrange themselves in two sections of batches before starting the kirtan. One party sings in chorus and the other batch follows them in chorus. They do kirtan alternatively.

There is a big and mighty spiritual vibration when party kirtans are held in masses. There is a silent competition between the parties.

Each one tries to excel the other in tune. There is great concentration in this method of doing kirtan. The mind is easily merged in the Lord and bhav samadhi ensues for a sincere bhakta.

Gunanuvad: In gunanuvad there is description of the glorious deeds of the Lord in His various incarnations. Side by side kirtans are also conducted. This is also called Harikathakalaksepam in South India.

Yash Kirtan: In yash kirtan the devotees sing the praises of the Lord in a variety of ways. They recall His various kind acts where He helped devotees like Dhruva, Prahlada and others.

Naradiya Kirtan: The divine sage Narada roams about in all the three worlds singing, "Sriman Narayana Narayana Narayana," even today. Devotees who have strong faith and devotion and yearn for his darshan can do this kirtan and get the blessings of Rishi Narada.

Nama and Lila: Singing the names of the Lord in melody is termed namakirtan. The influence and utility of this are highly appreciated among the Vaishnavites of Bengal, among all the religious cults of India. They think that the essence of all religions in Kaliyuga is namasankirtan. From singing the Lord's name aloud, divine love blossoms, and a devotee forgets the existence of the outer world while he sincerely sings the name of the Lord. A bhakta attains samadhi by singing the Lord's names just as a yogi does through yoga sadhana.

The primary aim of namasankirtan is to attain divine love and the main aim of the Vaishnava cult is to generate this. It is said that when Lord Chaitanya used to do namasankirtan with such devotion, thousands accompanied him.
Such singing is done according to the appropriate ragas and raginis (musical modes and harmonies) of the hours of the day and night, e.g. in the morning hours in bhairav, in the noon in bagesree, the evening in puruvi or yaman kalyan and in the night in behag.
Mass singing, when the singer and the audience both call the Lord with tears rolling down their cheeks, is characteristic of Bengali kirtan. Such examples are rare except in Indian music.
Namasankirtan is usually singing the Lord's name e.g. "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare," but as the Vaishnavites of Bengal believe Sri Chaitanya to be an incarnation of the Lord, they sometimes sing, "Sri Krishna Chaitanya Prabhu Nityananda Hare Krishna Hare Ram Sri Radhe Govinda," or "Nitai Gour Radhe Shyam Hare Krishna Hare Ram". Lord Sri Chaitanya and Nityananda deluged Bengal with divine love by namasankirtan, hence they are known as the fathers of sankirtan.
When the mind is attracted towards the Lord the heart experiences a selfless, blissful state. The devotee does not wish for liberation or moksha because even asking for or wanting moksha is a type of desire and selfishness. When the Lord is the only object of attainment, what else can be desired? The utility of namasankirtan is the purification of the heart, and it is both the method and the goal, as the name and the named are one and the same.
Lord Krishna's activities at different periods and in different circumstances and ways are termed lila. Any song composed and sung on such lila is known as lilakirtan or rasakirtan. Some are fond of namakirtan and others of lilakirtan. It is ascribed to Lord Sri Gouranga that nama sankirtan should be preached and practised among general companies, whereas lilakirtan should be tasted in the company of intimates, lest those who are not deeply immersed in Krishna bhakti misunderstand or misconstrue the significance of the Lord's lila. But it is difficult to judge the attainments of general companies. If the Lord's name gives one pleasure, it is but natural that singing the Lord's qualities and about His lila should also give equal pleasure.

Divya Nama Kirtan: This has developed in South India. It begins with 'Jaya Jaya' (victory to the Lord) and verses on the glory of the Lord's name and the glory of kirtan. After a few songs the blessings of the guru are invoked and then of the various gods and goddesses. For instance, Anjaneya kirtan, then some portion of the famous Gita Govinda of Sri Jeya Deva. (This is popularly known as 'Ashtapadi", as each piece of it contains eight verses. The Gita Govinda contains 24 such pieces, with slokas (verses) occurring in between the pieces. The Gita Govinda is full of madhurya rasa and fully reflects the attitudes of a friend and a servant.) After this, the songs of Sri Narayana Tirtha (known popularly as 'tarangam') are sung. The tarangams of Narayana Tirtha are full of devotional-vedantic type songs. The tarangam is followed by songs of Kabir, Mirabai, Surdas, Tulsidas and Saint Tyagaraja. Then are sung verses and songs in praise of Sri Ganesha, Sri Sarasvati, Devi, Sri Subramanya, Lord Siva and Panduranga.

'Glory of Sadhus' is an important item in the South Indian kirtan.

Then the all-pervading Lord is invoked by a devotional song.

After having got into this mood of a devoted son receiving his father with great reverence, respect and love, the devotee (the son) offers to his Father (the all-pervading Lord) incense, lights, flowers, sandalpaste, etc., and offers prasad.

It is at this moment that 'Jaya Jaya' (victory to the Lord) is sung, and in this mood the divya nama kirtan is begun.

Divya nama kirtan is also known by the popular name of 'dipa pradakshinam' (going round and round a light). A five-faced lamp is lit up and adorned with flowers, sandal paste and kum kum. It is on this light that the devotee does invocation to the Lord. The light is placed in the centre to symbolise the Light of lights, to give the devotee the real light of knowledge and lead him on from darkness to Light.

[To deviate a bit, divya nama kirtan includes in it all the nine modes of bhakti — savana (hearing the stories of the Lord), smarana (repeating His names), kirtan (singing His stories), padasevana (worshipping His feet), archana (offering flowers), vandana (prostrations unto His feet), dasya (servant-bhava), sakhya (the bhava of a friend) and Atma-nivedana (self-surrender).]

The all-pervading Lord assumes various forms to please His devotees. Round the light the devotees stand and begin to sing His names, "Rama Krishna Govinda, Krishna Rama Govinda," etc.

As this proceeds further and further, and as the feeling increases, the devotees go round and round the light, clapping their hands and dancing in joy, to the rhythm of the respective songs. It is noteworthy that these namavalis and kirtans are sung in different tunes or ragas.

It is beyond expression to give a vivid picture of how a bhakta will feel when he sings this song going around the light, clapping his hands and dancing in joy.

It is just about the middle of divya nama kirtan that the famous Gopika Gitam (Srimad Bhagavatam) is sung. Picturing as it does the various lilas of Lord Krishna sung by the gopis, the song takes one nearer and nearer the feeling of complete surrender.

The Gopika Gitam is followed by the song, "Anganam anganam," etc. All the devotees will form a circle by interlocking with each other's fingers, and rotate around the light. The beauty of this song lies in this — that people rotate in the reverse direction at the end of one portion of the song. The next song is still more excellent, in that the devotees expand the circle bit by bit (thus forming a bigger and bigger circle) as the song proceeds. This is done in quick succession and the tune and tala of this particular song is quite consistent with the quick movements.

This is followed by rhythmically beating time and tapping with two sticks held in the hands, while dancing — which is really very interesting and thrilling.

Then comes churning. This is done in batches of two or three (but in any case not more than three). One man takes hold of another man's left and right palms by his right and left palms and rotates in a circle (around the light) keeping the hands in a horizontal position. The song selected for this purpose is one of Mira Bai, whose devotional songs still inspire each and every one.

After this the devotees sing various songs on the various gods, and then a famous song of Sri Narayana Tirtha Swami on Lord Siva, 'Siva Siva bhava saranam,' is sung. Towards the end of this song one of the devotees assumes the pose of Nataraja and dances in ecstasy. It would seem that Lord Nataraja

of Tilliambalam (Sri Chidambaram) Himself is dancing. Such will be the feeling and atmosphere that this song and dance will create.
Then comes the song 'Tharo Jagannatha Tharo Hare' which deals with all the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu. At the end of this song, when Lord Anjaneya is invoked, one of the devotees will assume the pose of Anjaneya and sometimes one of the devotees, to please the
'Anjaneya', will put a plantain into 'His' mouth.
As the finishing touch to divya nama kirtan, the participants dedicate every one of their actions to Him.
At the end of divya nama kirtan, verses in praise of the Lord are sung, and the light is lifted from its place by one of the devotees (as soon as this is done, the bhaktas will bow to the place where the light was placed) and it will be taken to the place from where it was brought. The person taking the lamp will walk with rhythmical steps, in conformity with the rhythm of the song selected for this purpose, viz. one of the portions of Gita Govindam in praise of Lord Krishna.
The Lord will be requested by the bhaktas to go to bed and a song is specially sung for this purpose. And the cock will crow
"Kokoko," to announce that it is early morning. (This is actually done by one of the bhaktas). And all the devotees will sing in the bhupala tune (tune prescribed for early morning hours) to rouse up the Lord.
With a closing chant and with 'Jaya jaya', the divya nama kirtan is concluded.

Kirtan in Bengal

"Glorified, above all, is the chanting of the various names of the Lord, which cleanses the mirror of the subconscious mind, which extinguishes the great fire of the successive births and re-births, which operates like the moonbeam upon the white lily of spiritual life (knowledge), which swells the ocean of bliss, which gives the chanter the fullest enjoyment of that divine love at the utterance of each word, and bathes the mind and the senses in divine bliss."

Lord Gouranga

Bengal is known as the birth-place of sankirtan. Lord Gouranga was the first man who pioneered the propagation of sankirtan yoga in Bengal, Assam and Orissa during the middle of the fifteenth century. His kirtans are widely sung there. There is nothing comparable to the kirtan-singing of Bengal, outside the province.

There are several kinds of kirtan in Bengal. Pala kirtan, shyama sangita, parvati and nama kirtan are the important ones. Kirtans are generally sung with accompaniments of veena, pakhwaj, mridanga and other musical instruments.

Pala kirtan is the most ancient form of kirtan in Bengal. They are written in verse. Most of them deal with the life history of Lord Krishna. They were written by Ramprasad, Chandidass and Vidyapati during the sixteenth century. Pala kirtan is divided in several parts. They are: Balakanda, Yashoda, Gopal, Ras Lila, Gopi Viraha, etc. The Vaishnavas sing this kirtan in chorus on some special occasions.

Shyama sangita, or the song of mother Kali, is the special kirtan for the Shaktas, the worshipper of Shakti. They also sing Siva kirtan. These kirtans are sung only on the special occasions.

Nama kirtan are generally sung in the evening after puja. Parvati kirtan is another form of nama kirtan, sung in bhairavi tune in the early morning. It is also sung in prabati pheri. During arati they dance with musical instruments and sing "Hari Bol"

Kirtan in Maharashtra

Maharashtra also is celebrated for kirtan. The spiritual influence of Sri Eknath, Tukaram, Nam Dev, Jnana Dev, etc. (the reputed saints of Maharashtra) still exists.

It is understood that Maharashtra kirtan begins with the invocation of the grace of Lord Ganapathi, with stories and music interspersed, ending with the recital of some story from the Puranas.

Maharashtrians do not use harmonium and tablas. They use ektar, sitar, tambura and kartals and wooden pieces. They commence with hymns to the guru and Ganesha, and bhajan and then sing the names of Lord Krishna or

Vittal or Vittobha and the bhajans of Saint Tukaram. They commence with guru stotra and Ganesh stotra and bhajan.
They chant continuously for seven days. They tie gungrue to their legs and dance while doing kirtan either in a circle or in two lines.
Jnana Dev was the founder of an institution called Warkari Sampradaya which is still alive in all its glory in Maharashtra. It is called "Wari to Pandarpur'. All who have accepted this wari undertake to go to Pandarpur on Ashadh ekadasi (June-July) and Kartik ekadasi (October-November) days. They must visit Pandarpur at least once, if not on both these days. It is considered so very sacred that except in the event of physical illness, they continue to go to Pandarpur for the whole of their life, and from generation to generation. Devotees collect together and walk to Pandarpur from their villages. They do kirtan on the way.
They start the kirtan with 'Jaya Jaya Ram Krishna Hari'. This mantra is an abbreviated form of the maha mantra. Saint Tukaram had initiation of the mantra in his dream. In Gangapur, kirtan of Lord Dattatreya is performed
In Alandi near Poona where there is a samadhi of the reputed yogi, Sri Jnana Dev, people sing throughout twenty-four hours: "Jnana Dev Tuka Ram"

Benefits of Kirtan

Lord Hari said to Rishi Narada: "I dwell not in Vaikuntha nor in the hearts of the yogis, but I dwell where My devotee sings My name, O Narada."
If one does sankirtan from the bottom of his heart with feeling and divine love, even the trees, birds and animals will be deeply influenced. They will respond. Such is the powerful influence of sankirtan. Rishis and siddhas visit the place where kirtan is held and brilliant lights are to be seen around the marquee there.
Melodious music soothes the nerves. In America doctors cure diseases by music. Shakespeare says: "The man who hath no music in himself or is not moyed by the concord of sweet sounds, is fit for treason, strategem and spoils. The motions of his spirit are dull as night, his affections dark as Erebus. Let no such man be trusted." Vedanta and jnana can only be understood by a microscopic minority. The vast majority are fit for sankirtan-bhakti only. Even

the majority of highly intellectual people will derive immense benefit by doing sankirtan. Their minds will be elevated for practising meditation. The tossing of their minds will also be removed.

There is no yajna (sacrifice) greater than akhanda kirtan. It does not cost you anything. Whenever you get holidays, start akhanda kirtan for twenty-four hours. Change the batch of people every two hours. Those who take an active part in it should wear clothes washed by their own hands and take milk and fruits that day.

They should observe strictly the vow of celibacy and walk barefooted to the place where the yajna is held. The kirtan can be continued for a week also. The longer the better.

Akhanda kirtan produces tremendous purity of mind and other incalculable benefits. To induce samadhi and divine ecstatic mood quickly there is no other agent more powerful than akhanda kirtan.

You should have akhanda kirtan, prabhata kirtan and also daily kirtans at night in your own house.

How patiently and cautiously the fisherman watches the bait to catch a single fish; how energetically and untiringly a student works for passing his M.Sc. examinations; how vigilant is the man who wants to catch the train at 2 a.m.; how smart and careful is the surgeon in the operating-theatre when the patient is on the table; how alert is the lawyer when he argues a case in the sessions; how vigilant is the captain of a ship when there is a cyclone or an ice-berg.

Even so, you will have to work hard in the practice of kirtan if you wish to realise fully the fruits of kirtan bhakti yoga.

This world is impermanent; it is full of pain and sorrow only.

You must release yourself from this world of pain and death.

Therefore sing His names. This is the easiest way for attaining Self-realisation in this Kali Yuga.

Eradicate vicious qualities. Beware of mind. Beware of maya.

Maya deludes you every moment. You will have to cultivate divine virtues.

Never hurt other's feelings. Speak the truth, speak sweetly.

Observe celibacy and be pure in thought, word and deed. Be sincere.

Sincere people are very rare in this world. Serve the sick and the suffering. This is the greatest sadhana for the purification of the heart and for the descent of divine grace. Share what you have with others. Expand the heart. Give, give, give. Break down all the barriers that separate man from man and feel that you are serving the Lord in all, that the Lord pervades all beings. Now you are not doing this. You say "He is Mr. Agarwal", "He is Mr. Chatterjee", and so on. No, no. You must see the Lord in all. You must serve all with Narayana bhav (feeling that you are serving the Lord in all).

This is your foremost duty. All other duties are secondary.

Sankirtan of the Lord's name will give you the inner strength and wisdom necessary for the cultivation of all these virtues and eradication of vices, and for cultivating the proper attitude in serving others.

Train your children in kirtan. Let ladies do vigorous sankirtan.

Ladies are the backbone of religion. Religion is maintained through the devotion of our women alone. If they are inspired the whole world will be inspired. Disseminate sankirtan bhakti far and wide.

Bring Vaikuntha on earth in every house.

Do actions for His sake only. Be intent on His service. Work with the senses under control and with a disciplined mind. Be fully devoted to Him and sacrifice everything to Him. Service of humanity is only worship of God. Prostrate before Him with bhay and sincerity. Have Lord Krishna as your supreme goal. Take refuge under His lotus feet. Constantly think of Him. He will give you liberation. He will give you freedom and perfection.

Now then, stand up friends, gird up the loins. Push on in your practice. Be true and sincere. Be not troubled, be not anxious if there is a little delay in your progress and advancement. You will have to thoroughly overhaul old innate tendencies and fight with the senses and mind. Have full trust in God. Destroy all doubts and desires in the burning ground of mind by the fire of devotion. Remove the five thorns — pride of caste, learning, position, beauty and youth — that lie in the path. Only that man who is humbler than the blade of grass, who has more endurance than the tree, who cares not for honour and yet honours all, is fit to sing Hari's name always. Therefore acquire these four qualifications if you want to become real sankirtanists and desire to get the grace of Hari and His darshan quickly.

Fervently pray, "Tell me honestly, O Hari of compassion. I am sincere now. Will a day come to me in the near future, a day when tears will gush out from my eyes in silence out of sincere devotion unto Thee, and drench my clothes as in the case of Lord Gouranga?

When will I cry bitterly, O Hari, and roll about on earth in divine ecstasy, forgetting my body, relatives and surroundings and all differences, and seeing everywhere Hari and Hari alone like Prahlada, the devotee of yore? Draw me within, O Love. Take me into thy sweet bosom that I may be lost in Thee forever."

Sing His name from the bottom of your hearts. Merge in Him. Be like Him. Be established in Him. Be with Him. Become liberated in this very birth. Don't lose this golden opportunity. Weep not afterwards. Remember, delay in God-realisation is but death.

Blessed is the place where sankirtan conference is held. Sacred is the land trodden by the feet of bhagavatas. Twice blessed are those who do daily sankirtan. Thrice blessed are those who organise sankirtan sammelan. Hail to the name of the Lord, which brings infinite bliss, peace and immortality. May joy, bliss, peace and kaivalya abide in your forever.

DIFFERENT PATHS

We are often confronted with the puzzling question: "Are jnana (wisdom) and bhakti in conflict with each other?" My answer is emphatically, "no". There is in fact an inter-relationship between these two, the one supplementing the other. Bhakti is not at all antagonistic to jnana, and there is undoubtedly a mutual dependence between the two. Both lead to the same destination. They are not incompatible like acid and alkali. One can combine ananya bhakti (one-pointed devotion) with jnana yoga. The fruit of bhakti is jnana. Highest love (para bhakti) and jnana are one. Perfect knowledge is love; perfect love is knowledge. Sri Sankara, the advaita kevala jnani, was a great bhakta of Lord Hari, Hara and Devi. Jnana Dev of Alandi, another great yogi-jnani, was a

bhakta of Lord Krishna. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa worshipped Kali and obtained jnana through Swami Totapuri, his advaita guru.

Gouranga Maha Prabhu (Lord Chaitanya) of Bengal was a fine advaita-vedantic scholar, and yet he danced in the streets singing the Lord's names. It shows, therefore, that bhakti and jnana can be combined with much advantage.

Action, emotion and intelligence are the three horses that are linked to this body-chariot. They should work in perfect harmony or unison, then only will the chariot run smoothly. There must be integral development. You must have the head of Sankara, the heart of Buddha and the hand of Janaka. Vedanta without devotion is quite dry. Jnana without bhakti is not perfect. How can one who has realised his oneness with Atman remain without serving the world which is Atman only? Devotion is not divorced from jnana but rather jnana is exceedingly helpful to its perfect attainment.

Jnana yoga is like crossing a river by swimming; bhakti yoga is like crossing a river by boat. The jnani gets knowledge by self-reliance and assertion; the bhakta gets darshan of God by self-surrender. The jnani asserts and expands; the bhakta dedicates and consecrates himself to the Lord and contracts himself. Suppose there is a small circle in the body of the size of a one rupee coin. This rupee contracts and merges itself into the circumference of the circle. This is bhakti. Imagine there is a two-anna piece in the centre of the circle. This coin so expands that it occupies the whole body of the circle and the circumference also. This is jnana. A bhakta wants to eat sugar-candy; a jnani wants to become sugar-candy itself. A bhakta is like a kitten that cries for help; a jnani is like a baby-monkey that clings itself boldly to the mother. A bhakta gets gradual liberation; a jnani gets immediate liberation. A jnana yogi exhibits psychic powers through his will; a bhakta gets all the divine powers through self-surrender and the consequent descent of divine grace.

In the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna clearly points out that bhakti and jnana are not incompatible like oil and water. He says:"'The man who is full of faith obtains wisdom." (IV-39) "To these ever-harmonious, worshipping in love, I give the yoga of discrimination by which they come to Me." (X-10) "By devotion he knows Me in essence, who and what I am; having thus known Me in essence, he forthwith enters into the supreme." (XVIII-55)

To deny jnana altogether, to say that there is nothing beyond heavenly worlds as some sectarian bhaktas do, is the height of folly.
To deny bhakti and Ishvara as some dry vedantins (jnanis) do, is also foolishness. A happy combination of head and heart is perfection.

A Jnani is the Greatest Bhakta

Bhagavan Sri Sankaracharya defines bhakti as devotion to Atman. You cannot entirely separate bhakti from jnana. When bhakti matures, it becomes transmuted into jnana. A real jnani is a devotee of Lord Hari, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Siva, Durga, Sarasvati, Lakshmi, Lord Jesus and Buddha. He sees the same in all. Some ignorant people think that a jnani is a dry man and has no devotion. This is a sad mistake. A jnani has a very very large heart. Go through the hymns of Sri Sankaracharya and try to gauge the depth of his devotion. Go through the writings of Sri Appaya Dikshitar and measure the magnanimous depths of his unbounded devotion.
Swami Rama Tirtha was a jnani. Was he not also a bhakta of Lord Krishna? If a vedantin excludes bhakti, remember he has not really grasped and understood vedanta. The same nirguna (formless) Brahman manifests with a little maya in a corner as saguna (with form) Brahman for the pious worship of His devotees.
Lord Krishna takes a jnani as a first-class bhakta. " Of these, the wise, constantly harmonised, worshipping the One, is the best; I am supremely dear to the wise, and he is dear to Me. Noble are all these but I hold the wise as verily Myself; he, self-united, is fixed on Me, the highest path." Bhagavad Gita (VII-17,18).
Bhakti is not divorced from jnana. On the contrary, jnana intensifies bhakti. He who has knowledge of vedanta is well established in his devotion. He is steady and firm. Some ignorant people say that if a bhakta studies vedanta he will lose his devotion.
This is wrong. Study of vedanta is an auxilliary to increase and develop one's devotion. The devotion of a man proficient in vedantic literature is well-grounded. Bhakti and jnana are like the two wings of a bird to help one to fly unto Brahman, to the summit of mukti (liberation).

Sukadev was a perfect jnani. He was an avadhuta. How is it then that he studied the Bhagavatam and told its stories for seven days to Raja Parikshit? This is a wonder of wonders. He was absorbed in his meditation, but he came down from his heights and preached devotion. Did he lose his Atma-jnana? What is the truth here?

Sri Veda Vyasa wrote the eighteen Puranas for the benefit of the world. He wrote the Mahabharata which deals more with the path of action or life in worldly society, yet he was not satisfied in his heart of hearts. He was quite uneasy and restless. Narada met Vyasa and enquired: "What is the matter with you, O Vyasa? You are in a sunken, depressed mood." Vyasa spoke out his heart. Then Narada said: "You will have to write a book which treats of Krishna-prem and the lilas of Lord Krishna. Then only will you have peace of mind." Then Vyasa wrote the Bhagavatam, a book that is saturated with bhakti and kirtan of Hari. Rishis studied the Bhagavatam and narrated it in a lonely forest in the vicinity of Sukadev's hermitage. Sukadev was very much attracted towards the stories of the rishis.

He directly proceeded to his father and studied the Bhagavatam under him. Only then he taught the Bhagavatam to Rajah Parikshit.

Look at the devotion of Sukadev! From this incident it is quite clear that devotion and jnana are inseparable and a jnani is the greatest bhakta. Those vedantins who speak ill of devotion are deluded, ignorant persons.

Method of Combination

Namdev, Ekanath, Ramdas, Tulsidas, Tukaram, Mira and Madhusudana Swami were a few of the blessed souls to whom God gave His darshan. These bhaktas were yogis in their past life. They came into the world with a great asset of spiritual tendencies. They had worshipped God in several births with sincere devotion and did not do much sadhana in their final cycle of birth or incarnation.

Devotion was natural and spontaneous in them on account of the force of previous spiritual and devotional tendencies.

Ordinary people should adopt drastic, special measures and special sadhana for developing bhakti rapidly. New grooves, new channels and new avenues

have to be cut in the old, stony, devotionless heart. Several methods have to be harmoniously combined to cultivate bhakti to a maximum degree. If one method fails to kindle bhakti you will have to resort to other methods also. Just as the doctor, in order to cure an illness, will saturate the system with mercury in various forms through various routes - such as injunction method of hypodermic injection, by the intravenous method through veins and by oral method in the form of mixtures through mouth — so also will you have to saturate your heart with bhakti through prayer, japa, kirtan, service of bhaktas, charity, study of scriptures, austerity, pranayama, meditation, etc. Pranayama steadies the mind and removes the tossing of the mind. Therefore it is a help in developing bhakti. Yoga includes all those processes, physical as well as super-physical, whereby the modifications of the mind are restrained and the mind is rendered fit to realise the presence of the Supreme. Just as you cannot see the reflections of the sun in the water of a lake when there are waves and when the water is in an agitated condition, so also you can hardly see the self-effulgent God when the mind-lake is in a disturbed condition. Calm the mind. Still the bubbling thoughts, silence the emotions. You can see God face to face.

Bhakti and Karma Yoga

You cannot separate bhakti yoga from karma yoga or raja yoga.These yogas are not water-tight compartments. A blending of all the yogas is necessary if you want to achieve rapid spiritual progress. Bhakti yoga is the consummation of karma yoga, raja yoga is the consummation of bhakti yoga, and jnana yoga or vedantic realisation of unity is the consummation of all the rest.
Love in expression is service. That is the real bhakti which blossoms forth as selfless service of humanity with the feeling of seeing the Lord in all. Therefore serve all with supreme cosmic love. There is no room for pride of power or position. These are all illusory appendages. In reality we are all Brahman, the one reality, only. Accidentally we feel that we are this or that. Essentially you art all the same Krishna. In this world-play you have assumed various names
and forms. With this inner attitude you should serve.

Devotion is concentrated knowledge; knowledge is diffused love. Therefore, ultimately, the actual realisation that all are one will dawn in you.

OBSTACLES

An intelligent and comprehensive understanding of the various obstacles that act as stumbling blocks in the path of devotion is indispensably requisite for an aspirant. Then alone will he find it easy to conquer them one by one. Just as the sailor sails in and out of harbour along a dangerous coast, so also a detailed knowledge of these obstacles and the methods to conquer them will act as a guide in steering clear of danger in the ocean of spirituality. Hence I have given a very lucid exposition of the various obstacles and the effective methods to conquer them. Aspirants are requested to go through them very carefully, often, when they encounter difficulties on the path.

Poor Health

Spiritual practice is not possible without good health. A sickly, dilapidated body stands in the way of doing practice or discipline.

The aspirant should try his level best to keep good health always by regular exercise, asana, pranayama, moderation in diet, walking, running in open air, regularity in his work, meals, sleep, etc. He should avoid taking drugs as much as possible. He must take recourse to nature-cure such as fresh air, wholesome food, cold bath and dietietic adjustment and should always keep a cheerful attitude of mind under all conditions of life. Cheerfulness is a powerful mental tonic. There is intimate connection between body and mind. If one is cheerful, the body is also healthy. That is the reason why doctors now prescribe laughing three times daily in the treatment of diseases.

Some foolish aspirants refuse to take medicine when they are ailing seriously. They say: "It is my karma. We should not go against the will of God. The body is illusory and insentient. If I take medicine, it will increase body-idea." This is foolish philosophy.

Take medicine, exert. Leave the results to karma. This is wisdom.
These foolish people unnecessarily torture the body, allow the disease to strike a deep root and spoil their health. They cannot do any sadhana.

Impure and Immoderate Food

Mind is formed out of the subtlest portion of food. If the food is impure, the mind also becomes impure. This is the dictum of sages and psychologists. Food plays an important part in the evolution of mind. It has direct influence on the mind. Meat, fish, eggs, stale unwholesome food, onions, garlic etc. should be avoided by spiritual practitioners as they excite passion and anger. The food should be simple, bland, light, wholesome and nutritious. Liquors and narcotics should be strictly abandoned. Chillies, condiments, spiced dishes, pungent articles etc., must be rejected.
In the Bhagavad Gita you will find: "The foods that augment vitality, energy, vigour, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are delicious, bland, substantial and agreeable, are dear to the pure. The passionate desire foods that are burning, and which produce pain, grief and sickness. That which is stale and flat, putrid and corrupt, leavings and also unclean, is the food dear to the dark." (XVIII-8,9, 10)
Aspirants should not overload the stomach. Ninety percent of diseases take their origin in immoderation in diet. People have developed a strong habit of eating more food than what is actually necessary, from their very childhood. Hindu mothers stuff the stomachs of their children with too much food. This is not the way of caressing and loving children. Over-loading brings drowsiness and sleep immediately. If there is no hunger, you must not take any food.
The night meals should be very light for spiritual seekers. Half a seer of milk with one or two bananas is quite sufficient. Overloading is the chief factor in bringing night-pollutions.
Sannyasins and aspirants should take their bhiksha from the hands of those householders who earn their livelihood by honest means

Doubt

An aspirant begins to doubt whether God exists or not, whether he will succeed in his God-realisation or not. Lack of faith is a dangerous obstacle in the spiritual path. The student slackens his efforts when these doubts crop up. Whenever doubt tries to overpower any student he should at once take recourse to the company of mahatmas and remain with them for some time under the influence of their spiritual current. He should clear his doubts by conversing with them.

One should not get dejected after some practice for some months or one or two years. Even if you do only a little practice the effect is there, the tendencies are there. Nothing is lost. That is the immutable law of nature. You will not be able to detect the little improvement that has come out of a little practice, as you have no subtle intellect and as you have many kinds of impurities from beginningless time. You must develop the virtues of dispassion, patience and perseverance, to a maximum degree; you must have an unshakable conviction in the existence of God and in the efficacy of spiritual practices. You must have a strong determination: "I will realise God right now in this very birth; nay, in this very second. I will realise or die."

Tandra-Alasya-Nidra

Tandra is half-sleepy state. Alasya is laziness. Nidra is sleep.These three are great obstacles in the path of realisation. Sleep is a powerful force of maya. You will be imagining that you are meditating. The mind will immediately run through the old grooves in the twinkling of an eye. You will be doubting: "Did I go to sleep?

Or did I meditate now? I think I had a small nap, as I feel heaviness of eyelids and body." Sleep is the greatest obstacle, as it is very powerful. Even though a seeker is very careful and vigilant, yet it overpowers him somehow or other. This is a very strong habit. It takes time and demands great strength of will to tear this old, old habit.

Arjuna is called Gudakesha or conqueror of sleep. Lord Krishna addresses him as Gudakesha. Lakshmana also had conquered sleep. Besides these two

persons who had conquered sleep, we have not heard of anyone. There are people who have reduced sleep to two or three hours. Even yogis and jnanis sleep for two or three hours.

Sleep is a psychological phenomenon. The brain needs rest at least for a short time, otherwise man feels drowsy and tired. He can neither work nor meditate.

One should be careful in reducing his sleep. It should be done gradually. Go to bed at 10 p.m. and get up at 3.30 a.m. Reduce half an hour in one month. Get up at 3 a.m. in the next month and so on.

Seekers can gain time for their sadhana by reducing sleep. The practice of reducing sleep will be very troublesome in the beginning when the habits are changed, but it will be pleasant at the end. When drowsiness tries to manifest, stand up and do japa. Dash cold water on the face and head. Take only milk and fruits at night. Take the night meals before sunset. Use your commonsense always. The old habit may recur again and again. Tear it also again and again by suitable practices, strength of will, prayer, etc. The practice of keeping vigils on Sivaratri and Sri Krishna Janmashtami is highly commendable. Christians also keep vigils on Christmas and New Year's night.

Lack of a Preceptor

The spiritual path is thorny, rugged and precipitous. It is enveloped by darkness. The guidance of a guru who has already trodden the path is imperatively necessary. He will be able to throw light and remove the obstacles on the path.

He who lives under the guidance of a guru for twelve years, who carries out implicitly the orders of the guru, who serves the guru sincerely, taking him for Brahman, can really improve on the spiritual path. There is no other way for spiritual progress. So long as there is world, there are spiritual teachers and spiritual books. The number of jivanmuktas may be less in Kali Yuga than in Satya Yuga. If you cannot get an ideal guru you can even take a man who has been treadng the path of realisation for some time, who is straightforward and honest, selfless, free from pride and egoism and who has good character and knowledge of the scriptures, as your guru. Live with him for some time. Study

him carefully. If you are satisfied, take him as your preceptor and follow his instructions strictly. After you have accepted him once as your guru never suspect him and never find fault with him.

Do not change the guru very often or you will be bewildered. You will get different conflicting ideas. Everybody has got his own sadhana. You will find no improvement if you frequently change your method of sadhana. Stick to one guru and stick to his instructions. Stick to one method and you will evolve quickly. Single-minded devotion to guru, ideals, one kind of sadhana and whole-hearted application are indispensable requisite for God-realisation.

Beware of pseudo-gurus. They are knocking about in abundance in these days. They will exhibit some tricks or feats to attract people. Think that those who are proud, who are roaming about to make disciples and to amass money, who talk of worldly matters, who speak untruth, who boast of themselves, who are talkative, who keep company with worldly people and women, and who are fond of luxury, are false imposters. Do not be deceived by their sweet talk and lectures.

In this connection it will not be out of place to mention the story of a man who was in search of a perfect guru. He finally found one perfect sat-guru. He asked the guru: "O venerable Sir, give me upadesh (instruction)."

The guru asked: "What sort of upadesh do you want?" The disciple asked: "O beloved Master! Who is superior, disciple or guru?"

The guru said: "Guru is superior to disciple."

The disciple said: "O revered Guru! Make me a guru. I like that."

Such sort of disciples are plenty in these days.

Attachment to Sensual Objects

This is the greatest of all obstacles. The mind refuses to completely leave the sensual pleasures.

Through the force of
dispassion and meditation the desires get suppressed for sometime, then all of a sudden the mind thinks of sensual pleasures through the force of habit and memory. There arises mental disturbance.

Concentration decreases. The mind moves outwards in sensual Objects. In the Bhagavad Gita you will find: "O son of Kunti, the excited senses of even a wise man, though he be striving, impetuously carry away his mind. Such of the roving senses as the mind yields to, that hurries away the understanding, just as the gale hurries away a ship upon the waters."
(11-60,67).
"The objects of senses, but not the relish for them, turn away from an abstemious dweller in the body; and even relish turns away from him after the Supreme is seen." (Il-59).
Some desires lurk in the corners of the mind. Just as old dirt from the corners of the room comes out when you sweep, so also through the pressure of yoga practices these old lurking desires come out to the surface of the mind with redoubled force. The seeker should be very careful. He should be ever watching the mind vigilantly. He must nip the desires in the bud by developing his dispassion and discrimination and increasing his period of japa, worship and meditation. He must observe unbroken mauna and do vigorous meditation and pranayama. He should live on milk and fruits for forty days and should observe fast on ekadasi days (11th day of the lunar fortnight). He should completely give up mixing with anybody, never coming out of the room. He should plunge himself into sadhana.
Worldly ambition of all sorts can also be included under this heading. Man should have the one laudable ambition of getting Self-realisation.

Lack of Brahmacharya

No spiritual progress is possible without the practice of brahmacharya (celibacy). The semen is a dynamic force. It should be converted into ojas or spiritual energy by pure thoughts, japa and meditation. Those who are very eager to have God-realisation should observe unbroken celibacy strictly. Householders break their vows owing to their weakness, and hence do not find much advancement in the spiritual path. They place two steps on the spiritual ladder and fall down immediately to the ground because of lack of celibacy. This is a sad mistake. They should sleep separately.

They should be very serious. They should understand clearly the gravity of the situation. Taking a vow is a very sacred act. It must be kept up at all costs. Man only is the real culprit. He violates rules and laws. Women have got greater self-restraint than men, though scriptures say that they are eight times more passionate than men.

Remember the advantages of brahmacharya and evils of loss of semen. Wastage of semen brings nervous weakness, exhaustion and premature death. The sexual act destroys vigour of mind, body and senses, and annihilates memory, understanding and intellect. This body is meant for God-realisation. It must be well-utilised for higher, spiritual purpose.

It is very difficult to get a human birth. Remember those brahmachari-saints who had earned undying reputation and glory.

You can also achieve greatness if you preserve this vital energy and utilise it for divine contemplation. You are not crawling now. You have learnt to stand up and walk. You are a man. Behave like a real man. Observe the vow of brahmacharya strictly. Let your wife also understand and realise the importance and glory of brahmacharya.

Get for her religious books for daily study. Ask her to fast on ekadasi and to do japa of any mantra 21,600 times daily. Take refuge in God's name and japa. All obstacles will be removed. You can keep up this sacred vow.

Ojas is spiritual energy that is stored up in the brain. By sublime thoughts, meditation, japa, worship and pranayama the sexual energy can be transmuted into ojas-shakti. This energy can be utilised for divine contemplation and spiritual pursuits.

Anger and muscular energy can also be transmuted into ojas. A man who has a great deal of ojas in his brain can turn out immense mental work. He is very intelligent. He has a magnetic aura in his face and lustrous eyes. He can influence people by speaking a few words. A short speech can produce a tremendous impression on the minds of the hearers. His speech is thrilling. He has an awe-inspiring personality. Sri Sankaracharya, who was established in brahmacharya, worked wonders through his power of ojas. He held controversies and heated debates in different parts of India with learned scholars, through his power of ojas. A yogi always directs his attention to the accumulation of this divine energy, by unbroken chastity.

One of the disciples of Socrates said to his teacher, "My Venerable Master, kindly instruct me how many times a householder can visit his legal wife." Socrates replied, "Only once in his life time."
The disciple said: "O my Lord, this is absolutely impossible for worldly men. Passion is dreadful and troublesome. This world is full of temptations and distractions. Householders have not got strong will to resist temptations. Their senses revolt and are very powerful. The mind is filled with passion. Thou art a philosopher and a yogi. You can control. Pray kindly prescribe an easy path for the men of the world."
Then Socrates said: "Well, a householder can have copulation once a year." The disciple replied, "O my venerable Sir, this is also a hard job for them. You must prescribe an easy course." Socrates then said: "Well my dear disciple, once in a month. This is suitable. This is quite easy. I think you are satisfied now."
The disciple said, "This is also impossible, my revered Preceptor, householders are very fickle-minded. Their minds are full of sexual thoughts and desires. They cannot remain even for a single day without sexual intercourse. You have no idea of their mentality."
Then Socrates said, "Well said, my dear child. Do one thing now. Go direct to the burial ground. Dig a grave and purchase a coffin and the winding sheet for the corpse beforehand. Now you can spoil yourself any number of times you like. This is my final advice to you."
This last advice pierced the heart of the disciple. He felt it keenly. He thought over the matter seriously and understood the importance and glory of celibacy. He took a vow of strict unbroken celibacy for life and did meditation with sincerity of purpose. He slept on a coarse mat, ate a little pure food, shunned the company of ladies and plunged himself into deep meditation. He became an urdhvareto-yogi and had Self-realisation. He became one of the pet disciples of Socrates.

Name and Fame

One can renounce even wife, son and property, but it is difficult to renounce name and fame. This is a great obstacle in the path of God-realisation. It brings

a downfall in the end. It does not allow the aspirant to march forward in the spiritual path. He becomes a slave of respect and honour. As soon as he gets some purity and ethical progress, ignorant people flock to him and pay homage and salutations. The aspirant gets puffed up with pride. He thinks he is a great bhakta now. He eventually becomes a slave of his admirers.

He cannot notice his slow downfall. The moment he mixes freely with householders he loses what little he had gained during eight or ten years. The admirers also leave him because they do not find any solace or influence in his company.

Some people imagine that a mahatma has got siddhis and they can get children and wealth through his grace, and roots for removal of diseases. They always approach a sadhu with various motives.

The aspirant, through bad association, loses his dispassion and discrimination. Attachment and desires crop up now in his mind. An aspirant should be very humble. He should pass for quite an ordinary man. He should not accept any rich presents from householders. He will be affected by the bad thoughts of those who offer presents. He should never think that he is superior to anybody.

He should not treat others with contempt, but always with respect. Then only will respect come by itself. He should treat respect, honour, name and fame as dung or poison, he should wear disrespect and dishonour as a golden necklace, then only will he reach the goal safely.

Evil Company

The effects of evil company are highly disastrous. The aspirant should shun all sorts of evil company. The mind is filled with bad ideas by contact with evil companions. The little faith in God and scriptures also vanishes. "A man is known by the company he keeps." "Birds of the same feather flock together." These are proverbs or wise maxims. They are quite true. Just as a plant-nursery is to be well-fenced in the beginning for protection against cows etc., so also a neophyte should protect himself very carefully from foreign evil influences, otherwise he is ruined totally. The company of those who speak lies, who commit adultery, theft, cheating and double-dealing, who are greedy,

who indulge in idle talks, back-biting and tale-bearing, and who have no faith in God and in the scriptures etc., should be strictly avoided.
Bad surroundings, obscene pictures, obscene songs, novels that deal with love, cinemas, theatres, the sight of pairing of animals, words which give rise to bad ideas in the mind - in short anything that causes evil thoughts in the mind, constitutes evil company.
Aspirants generally complain: "We are doing sadhana for the last fifteen years. We have not made any solid spiritual progress." The obvious answer is that they have not totally shunned evil company.
Newspapers deal with all sorts of worldly topics. Aspirants should entirely give up reading of newspapers. Reading newspapers kindles worldly thoughts, causes sensational excitement in the mind, makes the mind outgoing, produces an impression that the world is a solid reality and makes one forget the Truth that lies underneath these names and forms.

False Contentment

The seeker gets some experience during the course of his sadhana. He sees wonderful visions of rishis, mahatmas, astral entities of various descriptions, etc. He hears various melodious anahat sounds (nada), he smells divine aromas and gets the powers of thought-reading, foretelling etc. He now foolishly imagines that he has reached the highest goal, and stops his further sadhana. He gets false contentment. This is a serious mistake. These are all auspicious signs that manifest on account of a little purity and concentration. These are all encouragements which God gives as a sort of incentive for further progress and intense sadhana. The aspirant gets more strength of conviction by having these experiences.

Rasaswada

Rasawada is bliss that comes from lower savikalpa samadhi. The seeker who has experienced this super-sensual bliss imagines that he has reached the final destination, and gives up his sadhana.

Just as a man digs the earth very deep to find out the most precious hidden treasures and gems, just as a man is not satisfied with the petty things he has found out just beneath the surface of the ground, so also the seeker should continue his sadhana till he gets the unconditioned state, or highest goal of life. He should never be satisfied with lower experiences. He should compare his experiences with the highest experiences of sages, described in the Upanishads, and find out whether they exactly tally with them or not. He should struggle till he gets the inner feeling: "I have obtained all desires, I have done everything, I know everything. There is nothing more to be known. There is nothing more to be obtained."

So-called Friends

So-called friends are your real enemies. You cannot find even a single unselfish friend in this universe. Your real friend in need who attends on you sincerely is God, the indweller of your heart. Worldly friends come to you to get money and other comforts when you are rolling in a Rolls Royce, when you have plenty of money. When you are in adverse circumstances no one will care to look at you. Even your sons and wife will forsake you. The world is full of avarice, hypocrisy, double-dealing, flattery, untruth, cheating and selfishness. Be careful. Friends come to have idle talk with you and waste your time. They have no idea of the value of time. They want to pull you down and make you also worldly. They will say: "Friend, what are you doing? Earn money as much as possible. Live comfortably now. Eat, drink, be merry. Let us go to talkies. To-day there is a good new American Hollywood production running at such and such a theatre. There is beautiful American dance. Who knows about the future? Where is God? Where is heaven? There is no rebirth. There is no liberation. It is all gup and gossip of pandits. Enjoy now. Why do you fast? There is nothing beyond this world. Give up all sadhana and meditation. You are wasting your time." You will get such sorts of advice from such worldly friends. Cut off all connections ruthlessly. Don't talk to any of your friends, however sincere they seem to be. Hide yourself away. Live alone at all times.

Trust only in that immortal Friend who dwells in your heart. Then alone are you perfectly safe. He will give you whatever you want. Hear His sweet counsel from within with one-pointed mind and follow.

Depression

Aspirants get moods of depression occasionally. These moods may be due to indigestion, cloudy condition, influence of lower astral entities and revival of old tendencies from within. Treat the cause. Remove the cause. Do not allow depression to overpower you. Immediately take a long, brisk walk. Run in the open air. Sing divine songs. Chant Om loudly for one hour. Walk along the seaside or riverside. Play on the harmonium, if you know the art. Do some pranayama. Drink a small cup of orange-juice or hot tea or coffee. Read some of the elevating portions of Avadhuta Gita and Upanishads.

Religious Hypocrisy

Just as hypocrisy prevails in worldly persons, so also hypocrisy manifests in aspirants, sadhus and sannyasins who have not completely purified their lower nature. They pretend to be what they are not in reality. They pose for big mahatmas and siddha purushas when they do not even know the alpha-bheta of yoga or spirituality.

They put on serious Sunday faces which some Christian missionaries sometimes assume on sabbath days. They cheat others and do mischief wherever they go. They boast and brag too much of themselves and practise hypocrisy to get respect, honour, good food and clothing and to cheat credulous simpletons. There is no greater crime than trading in religion. This is a capital sin. Religious hypocrisy is more dangerous than hypocrisy of worldly persons. A long course of treatment is needed for its eradication. A religious hypocrite is very far from God. He cannot dream of God-realisation. Elaborate painting of the forehead, wearing of too many tulsi and rudraksha malas on neck, arms, forearms and ears are some of the external signs of a religious hypocrite.

Moral and Spiritual Pride

As soon as an aspirant gets some spiritual experience or siddhis he is puffed up with vanity and pride. He thinks too much of himself.
He separates himself from others and treats others with contempt. He cannot mix with others.
Just as worldly people are puffed up with the pride of wealth, so also sadhus and aspirants are puffed up with their moral qualifications. They will say: 'I have practised unbroken celibacy for the last twelve years. Who is pure like myself? I lived on leaves and gram for four years. I have done service in an ashram for ten years. No-one can serve like myself." This kind of pride is also a serious obstacle in the path of God-realisation. It must be eradicated thoroughly. As long as man boasts about himself, so long he is the same little jiva only. He cannot have divinity.

Prejudice, Intolerance and Bigotry

Prejudice is unreasonable dislike for something or some person. Prejudice makes the brain callous. It cannot vibrate properly to grasp things in their true light. One who is prejudiced cannot endure honest differences of opinion. This is intolerance. Religious intolerance and prejudice are great obstacles in the path of God-realisation. Some orthodox Sanskrit pandits (priests) strongly think that only Sanskrit-knowing people will have God-realisation. They think that English-knowing sannyasins are barbarians and they cannot have Self-realisation. Look at the thick foolishness of these bigoted priests. Incorrigible, petty-minded, narrow-hearted,
crooked sectarians. If one has prejudice against the Bible or Koran, he cannot grasp the truths that are inculcated there. His brain becomes hard, stony and callous. A man can realise by studying and following the principles that are laid down in Koran, Bible or Zend Avesta or the Pali books of Lord Buddha. Aspirants should try to remove prejudice of all sorts. Then only can they see truth everywhere. Truth is not the sole monopoly of the Sanskrit priests of

Benares or the vairagis of Ayodhya. Truth, Rama, Krishna and Jesus are the common property of all.
Sectarians and bigoted people confine themselves to a small circumscribed circle or area. They have no large heart. They cannot see the good points in others on account of their jaundiced vision.
They think that only their principles and doctrines are good. They treat others with contempt. They think that their sect is superior to others and that only their teacher is a man of God-realisation. They always fight with others. There is no harm in praising one's own guru and sticking to his principles and teachings, but one should pay equal regard to the teachings of other prophets and other saints.
Then only the feeling of universal love and universal brotherhood will manifest. This will eventually lead to the realisation of God or Atman in all beings. Prejudice, intolerance, bigotry and sectarianism should be thoroughly eradicated. Prejudice and intolerance are forms of hatred.

Shilly-shallying (Vikshepa)

This is tossing of the mind, which is an old habit of the mind. All sadhaks generally complain of this trouble. The mind never stays at a fixed point for a long time. It jumps hither and thither like a monkey. It is always restless. This is due to the force of rajas.
In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna prescribes a sadhana for removing tossing of the mind: "As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goes forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under control of the Self. Abandoning without reserve all desires born of imagination, and completely restraining the whole group of senses by the mind from all sides, little by little let him gain tranquility by means of reason controlled by steadiness; having made the mind abide in the Self, let him not think of anything. " (VI-24,26).
Tratak is an effective method for destroying tossing of the mind Practise this for half an hour on a picture of Lord Krishna or on a black point on the wall. First do this for two minutes and gradually increase the period. Close the eyes when tears come. Look steadily at the object without winking. Do not strain the eyes. Look gently.

(There are students who can do tratak for 2 or 3 hours.)
Pranayama is another method for removing restlessness. Sit in padmasana or siddhasana in your meditation room, in front of the picture of your Ishta Devata (guiding deity). Close the right nostril with the right thumb. Draw in the air very, very slowly through the left nostril. Then close the left nostril also with the little finger and the ring finger of the right hand. Retain the air as long as you comfortably can. Then exhale very very slowly through the right nostril, after removing the thumb. Now half the process is over.
Then draw the air through the right nostril. Retain the air as before and exhale it very very slowly through the left nostril.
All these six processes constitute one pranayama. Do 20 in the morning and 20 in the evening. Gradually increase the number.
Have a mental attitude that all the divine qualities such as mercy, love, forgiveness, peace, joy, etc., are entering into your system along with the inspired air, and all devilish qualities such as lust, anger, greed etc., are being thrown out along with the expired air.
Repeat OM or gayatri mantra during inhalation, retention and exhalation.
Hard-working seekers can do 320 rounds daily in four sittings (morning, evening, night and midnight).
Do not produce any sound during inhalation and exhalation.
Close the eyes during practice. Take a little rest when one pranayama is over. Take three long breaths - inhalation and exhalation. This will give you rest.

Dilly-dallying (Aimless Wandering)

Some aspirants have got a habit of wandering aimlessly. They cannot stick to one place even for a week. They want to see new places and new faces, and they want to talk with new people. The wandering habit must be checked. A rolling stone gathers no moss. A seeker should stick to one place at least for a period of twelve years.
If his health is delicate he can stay for six months in one place during summer and rainy season and in another place for six months during the winter.
Sadhana suffers if one wanders constantly. Too much walking produces weakness and fatigue.

Lingual Diarrhoea

If a man talks too much, he suffers from diarrhoea of the tongue. Quiet people cannot sit even for a second in the company of these loquacious or garrulous people. They will talk five hundred words per second. There is an electric talking dynamo in their tongues. They are restless people. If you lock them for a day in a solitary room, they will die.

Much energy is wasted by too much talking. The energy that is spent in talking must be conserved and utilised for divine contemplation. A talkative man cannot dream of having peace for even a short time. An aspirant should talk only a few words when necessary and that, too, on spiritual matters only. A talkative man is unfit for the spiritual path. Practise mauna daily for two hours and especially during meals. On Sundays observe full mauna for 24 hours. Do a lot of japa and meditation during mauna. (The mauna that is observed during meditation cannot be taken as mauna).

Mauna should be observed by householders at such a time when there are great opportunities for talking and when visitors come to meet. Only then the impulse of speech can be checked. Ladies are very talkative. They create troubles in the house by idle talk and gossiping. They should observe mauna particularly. Too much talking is rajasic. Great peace comes by observance of mauna. By gradual practice, prolong the period to six months and then two years.

Discussing Too Much

Some people in whom the reason has developed have got the habit of entering into unnecessary controversies and discussions.

They cannot remain quiet even for a second. They will create opportunities for heated debates. Too much discussion ends in enmity and hostility. Much energy is wasted in useless discussions.

Intellect is a help if it is used in the right direction; intellect is a hindrance if it is used in unnecessary discussions. Intellect takes the aspirant to the threshold of intuition - thus far and no further.
Reason helps in inferring the existence of God and finding out suitable methods for Self-realisation. Intuition transcends reason but does not contradict reason. Intuition is direct perception of matters of the physical plane. Wherever there is why and wherefore there is reasoning. In transcendental matters which are beyond the reach of reason, reason is of no use.
Intellect helps people a lot in reflection and ratiocination, but people in whom reasoning is highly developed become sceptical.
Their reason becomes perverted and they also lose faith in Vedas and in the teachings of mahatmas. They say: "We are rationalists.
We cannot believe anything which does not appeal to our reason. We do not believe the Upanishads. We reject anything that does not come within the domain of reason. We have no faith in God and Sat-gurus." These so-called rationalists are a type of atheist only. It is very difficult to convince them. They have an impure, perverted reason. Thoughts of God cannot enter their brains. They will not do any kind of spiritual sadhana. They say: "Show us your Brahman of the Upanishads or Ishvara of the bhaktas." Those who are of doubting nature will perish. Reason is a finite instrument. It cannot explain many mysterious problems of life. Only those who are free from the so-called rationalism and scepticism can march in the path of God-realisation.

Irregularity in Sadhana

This is also a great obstacle in the path of realisation. Just as a man is regular in taking his food, so also must he be strictly regular in his sadhana. He must get up punctually at 3.30 a.m. or 4 a.m. and start his japa, worship and meditation. One can get the meditative mood quite easily without effort if he does his sadhana at fixed hours, both morning and night. One should have the same pose, the same room, the same seat, the same mental attitude, the same hours for meditation. Everybody should have his daily routine and should strictly adhere to it at all cost. Leniency to the mind will upset the whole

programme. One should do the spiritual sadhana untiringly with indefatigable energy, asinine patience, admanantine will and iron determination, then only is sure success possible. Meals should be taken at regular hours. One should go to sleep at fixed hours.

Cessation of Sadhana

An aspirant is very enthusiastic in his sadhana in the beginning.
He is full of zeal and takes a great deal of interest, as he expects to get some results. When he does not get these results he gets discouraged, loses interest and slackens his efforts. He loses his faith in the efficacy of the sadhana and gives it up completely. Sometimes the mind gets disgusted with one particular kind of sadhana and wants some new kind. Just as mind wants some variety in food and other things, so also it wants variety in the mode of sadhana also. It rebels against monotonous practice. The aspirant should know how to coax the mind on such occasions and to extract work from it by a little relaxation of mind.
Cessation of sadhana is a grave mistake. Spiritual practices should never be given up under any circumstances. Evil thoughts will be ever waiting to enter the gates of the mental factory. If the aspirant stops his sadhana, his mind will be a Satan's workshop. Do not expect anything. Be sincere and regular in your daily routine, worship and meditation. The sadhana will take care of itself. You mind your own daily business; the fruit will come by itself. Let me repeat here the words of Lord Krishna: " Thy right is to work only, never with its fruits. So let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached." (II-47) Your efforts will be crowned with sanguine success by the Lord. It takes a long time for purification of the mind and for getting a one-pointed mind. Be cool and patient. Continue your sadhana regularly.

Fault-finding

This is a detestable old habit of man. It clings to him tenaciously. The mind of the aspirant who always tries to poke his nose into the affairs of other men is

always outgoing. How can he think of God, when his mind is ever engaged in finding faults of others? Why do you care for the faults of others? Improve yourself first, reform yourself first, purify yourself first. Wash the impurities from your own mind. He who applies himself diligently to his spiritual practices cannot even find a single second to look into the affairs of others. If the fault-finding nature dies there will be no occasion for criticising others. Much time is wasted in back-biting, scandal-mongering etc. Time is most precious. We do not know when Lord Yama will take away our lives. Every second must be utilised in divine contemplation. If you spent even a fraction of the time that you have wasted, in finding your own faults, you would have become a great saint by this time. Let the world have its own ways. Mind your own affairs, clean your mental factory. That man who does not interfere with others is the most peaceful man in the world.

Fear

This is a very great obstacle in the path of God-realisation. A timid aspirant is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path. He cannot dream of Self-realisation even in one thousand births. One must risk his life if he wants to attain immortality. Spiritual wealth cannot be gained without self-sacrifice, self-denial or self-abnegation. A fearless dacoit is fit for God-realisation, only his current will have to be changed. Fear is not an imaginary non-entity. It assumes solid forms and troubles the aspirant in various ways. If one conquers fear he is on the road to success. He has almost reached the goal. Fear of public criticism stands in the way of the aspirant in his spiritual progress. He should stick to his sadhana even though he is persecuted and even though he is at the point of being blown up at the mouth of a machine-gun. Then only will he grow and realise. All aspirants suffer from this dire malady. Fear of all sorts should be totally eradicated by reflection, enquiry and devotion and cultivation of the opposite quality, courage. Positive overcomes negative. Courage overpowers fear and timidity.

Force of Old Samskaras (Tendencies)

When the aspirant does intense sadhana to obliterate the old innate tendencies, they try to rebound upon him with a vengeance and with redoubled force. They take forms and come before him as stumbling blocks. The old samskaras of hatred, enmity, jealousy, feeling of shame, respect, honour, fear etc., assume grave forms.

Samskaras are not imaginary non-entities. They turn into actualities when opportunities crop up. The aspirant. should not be discouraged. They will lose their force after some time and die by themselves. Just as the dying wick burns with intensity just before it gets extinguished, so also those old samskaras show their teeth and force before they are eradicated. The aspirant should not get unnecessarily alarmed. He will have to increase the force or momentum of spiritual samskaras by japa, meditation, worship, study, virtuous actions, satsang and cultivation of sattvic virtues.

These new spiritual samskaras will neutralise the old vicious ones.

Jealousy

Even sadhus who have renounced everything, who live with one cloth only in the caves of Gangotri and Uttarkasi in the Himalayas, are not free from jealousy. Sadhus are more jealous than householders. Their hearts burn when they see some other sadhu in a flourishing condition, when they notice that the neighbouring sadhu is respected and honoured by the public. They try to vilify their neighbour and adopt methods for his destruction or elimination. What a sad sight, what a deplorable spectacle! Horrible to think of, dreadful to imagine. When the heart burns, how can they expect peace of mind. Even highly educated people are very mean and petty-minded.

Jealousy is the worst enemy of peace, bhakti and wisdom. It is the strongest weapon of maya. Aspirants should be always alert.

They should not become slaves of name and fame and jealousy. If there is jealousy, one is a small being only. He is far from God. One should rejoice at the welfare of others and one should develop complacency when he sees others in prosperous conditions. He should feel the presence of God in all

beings. All forms of jealousy must be totally eradicated. Just as milk again and again bubbles out during the process of boiling, so also jealousy bursts out again and again. It must be entirely rooted out.

Habit of Self-justification

This is a very dangerous habit for an aspirant. It is an old-standing habit. Self-assertion, self-sufficiency,
obstinacy and speaking falsehood are the constant attendants of self-justification.
He who has these can never improve himself, as he will never admit his faults. He will always try his level best to justify himself in various ways. He will not hesitate to tell several lies to support his false slatements. He will tell one lie to cover another lie and he will speak lies ad infinitum. The aspirant should always admit his faults, mistakes, weaknesses etc., then and there. Then only can he improve quickly.

Back-biting

This is a dirty abominable habit of petty-minded people. Almost all are victims of this dire malady. This has become an ingrained habit of narrow-hearted mischievous people. The play of this world is kept up by this evil habit of man. It is maya's strong weapon to spread restlessness throughout the world. If you see four men sitting in a group, think that some back-biting is surely going on there. If you behold that four sadhus are talking, you can at once infer without a shadow of doubt that they are back-biting against some person or other. One sadhu will be saying: "The food of that kshetra is very bad. That swami is a very bad man." Back-biting is more prevalent amongst so-called sadhus than amongst householders. Even educated sannyasins and householders are not free from this dreadful disease. A sadhu who is engaged in contemplation will always be alone.
The root-cause of back-biting is ignorance or jealousy. The back-biter wants to pull down or destroy the man who is in a prosperous condition by false

vilification, slander, calumny, false accusations, etc. There is no other work for a back-biter except scandal-mongering. He lives on back-biting. He takes pleasure in back-biting and mischief-making. Backbiters are a menace to society. They are the worst criminals. They need capital punishment. Double-dealing, crookedness, diplomacy, chicanery, quibbling, tricks and artifices are the attendants of back-biting. A back-biter can never have a calm, peaceful mind. His mind is always planning or scheming in wrong directions. An aspirant should be absolutely free from this dreadful vice. He should walk alone, live alone, eat alone and meditate alone. If a man who has pride and selfishness says:
"I am meditating for six hours daily," it is all
nonsense. There is no hope of getting a meditative mood, even for five minutes, unless a man removes all these evil thoughts and purifies his mind first by selfless service for six years.

Anger

Anger is a gate to hell. It destroys the knowledge of Self. It is born of rajas. It is all-consuming and all-polluting and is the greatest enemy of peace. It is a modification of lust. Just as milk is changed into curd, so also lust or desire becomes transmuted into anger. When a man's desire is not gratified he becomes angry, then his mind becomes confused and he loses his memory and understanding. A man when he is angry will say anything he likes and do anything he likes. He even commits murder. A hot word results in fighting and stabbing. He is under intoxication and loses his senses for the time being. He does not know what he is exactly doing. He is a prey to anger, he is under the sway of anger. Anger is a form of shakti (power) or Devi.
Resentment, indignation, fury, wrath and irritation are all varieties of anger according to degree or intensity. If a man wants to correct another man and uses slight anger unselfishly as a force to check and improve him, then it is called 'religious anger'. Suppose a man molests a girl and tries to outrage her, and a by-stander becomes angry toward this criminal; then it is called righteous indignation.' This is not bad. Only when the anger is the outcome of greed or selfish motives, is it bad. Sometimes a religious teacher has to

express a little anger outwardly to correct his disciples. This is also not bad. One has to do it, but he should be cool within and hot and impetuous outside. He should not allow the anger to take deep root in his mind for a long time. It should pass off immediately like a wave in the sea.

If a man becomes irritable for trifling things very often, it is a definite sign of mental weakness. One should control irritability by developing patience, enquiry, forgiveness, love, mercy and the spirit of service. When anger is controlled it becomes changed into ojas.

Just as electricity is changed into heat or light, energy takes another form. If an aspirant has controlled anger completely, half of his sadhana is over. All vices, evil qualities and wrong actions take their origin in anger. If anger is controlled all bad qualities die by themselves. He who has controlled anger cannot do any wrong or evil actions. He is always just. An easily irritated man is always unjust. He is swayed by impulses and emotions. Too much loss of semen is one cause of irritability and anger.

The root-cause of anger lies in egoism. Through enquiry, egoism should be removed, then only can one control anger completely to the very root. Through development of the opposite virtues - such as forgiveness, love, peace, compassion and friendship — it can be controlled to some extent. The force can be reduced. Only jnana (wisdom) completely removes all samskaras (tendencies). Practice of mauna is also of great help in controlling anger.

It is very difficult to say when a man will be thrown into a state of fury. All of a sudden he gets a terrible fit of anger over a trifling matter. When the anger assumes a grave form, it becomes difficult to control. It should be controlled when it assumes the form of a small ripple in the subconscious mind. One should watch the mind carefully whenever there is a sign of irritability. Then it becomes very easy.

When a man is furious, he has lost all control. Anger gains strength by repetition. If it is checked man gradually gains strength of will. An aspirant should direct all his attention towards the conquest of this powerful enemy. Sattvic food, japa, meditation, prayer, satsang, enquiry, service, kirtan, brahmacharya and pranayama will all pave a long way in eradicating this dire malady.

A combined method should be adopted in its removal. When a man abuses you, try to keep quiet. Bear the insult. You will gain strength.
Check the impulses and emotions to begin with. Whenever there is likelihood of a burst of anger during conversation or debate, stop your speech. Always try to speak sweet, soft words. The words must be soft and the arguments hard. If the words are hard, it will bring discord. If you find it difficult to control anger, leave the place at once and take a brisk walk. Drink some cold water immediately.
Chant loudly for 10 minutes and then repeat 'Om shanti' mentally for 10 minutes. Smoking, meat-eating and drinking of liquors make the heart very irritable. Therefore they should be completely abandoned. (Tobacco brings diseases of the heart. It gives rise to
'tobacco-heart', which gets easily irritated.)
Be careful in the selection of companions.
Talk little. Mix little.
Plunge yourself into spiritual sadhana. Think that the world is a long dream; that the world is unreal. This will prevent anger. Enquire:
"What is abuse? What do I gain by getting angry? It is only waste of energy and time. I am not the body. The Atman is the same in all." This will completely remove anger. Anger spoils the blood by throwing various poisons into it.

Inertia

A microscopic minority only are fit for whole-timed meditation. Only people like Sadasiva Brahman and Sri Sankara can spend the whole time in meditation. Many sadhus who take to the path of renunciation have become completely tamasic. Tamas (delusion) is mistaken for sattva (purity). This is a great blunder. One can evolve beautifully by doing karma yoga in the world if he knows how to spend his time profitably. A householder should seek the advice of sannyasins and mahatmas from time to time, draw up a daily routine and adhere to it strictly amidst worldly activities. Rajas (restlessness) can be converted into sattva. It is impossible to convert tamas all of a sudden into sattva. Tamas should be first turned into rajas.

Young sadhus who take to the path of renunciation do not stick to a routine. They do not hear the words of elders nor obey the orders of the guru. They want absolute independence from the very beginning. They lead a happy-go-lucky life. There is no one to check them. They have their own ways. They do not know how to regulate the energy or how to chalk out a daily programme. They aimlessly wander about from place to place, becoming tamasic within six months. They sit for half an hour in some asana and imagine that they are having samadhi. They think that they are realised souls.

If an aspirant who has taken to this path finds that he is not evolving, he is not improving in meditation and is going into a state of inertia and dullness, he should at once take up some kind of service for some years, and work vigorously. He should combine work with meditation. This is wisdom, this is prudence, this is sagacity. Then he should go in for seclusion. One should use his commonsense all throughout his sadhana. It is very difficult to go out of this state of inertia. A sadhak should be very cautious. When tamas tries to overtake him he should immediately do some sort of brisk work. He can run in the open air, draw water from wells, etc.

He should drive it off by some intelligent means or other.

Greed

Greed always makes the mind restless. A man of one lakh of rupees plans to get ten lakhs. A millionaire schemes to become a multi-millionaire. Greed is insatiable, there is no end to it. It assumes various subtle forms. A man thirsts for name and fame and applause. This is greed. A sub-judge thirsts for becoming a High Court judge and a third-class magistrate thirsts for becoming a first-class magistrate with full powers. This is also greed. A sadhu thirsts for getting siddhis. This is another form of greed. A sadhu thirsts for opening several ashrams in different centres. This is also greed. A greedy man is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path. Destroy greed of all sorts by enquiry, devotion, meditation, japa, contentment, integrity, honesty and disinterestedness, and enjoy peace.

Moha — Infatuation

Here comes another great obstacle which troubled even Sri Sankara. Moha is infatuated love for one's own body, wife, children, father, mother, brothers, sisters and property. Like greed, it takes various subtle forms. The mind gets attached to one name and form.
If it is detached from one name and form, it clings tenaciously to another.
If a baby-monkey dies the mother-monkey will carry the dead skeleton for two or three months, such is the power of moha.
Mysterious is maya. Mysterious is moha. If the father receives a telegram that his only son is dead, he immediately gets a shock and faints. This is the power of moha. The whole world runs through moha. It is through moha that one is bound to the wheel of samsara.
One gets pain through moha. It creates attachment. It is a kind of powerful liquor that brings intoxication in the twinkling of an eye.
You never wept when millions of people died in the last war, but you weep bitterly when your wife dies. Why? Because you have moha for her. Moha creates the idea of 'mine-ness', therefore you say: "My wife, my son, my horse, my home." This is bondage, this is death. Moha produces delusion and perverted intellect. Through its force you mistake the unreal, dirty body for the real, pure Atman; you take the unreal world as a solid reality. These are the functions of moha, which is a strong weapon of maya. Even sannyasins get moha for their ashrams and disciples. Moha should be eradicated by discrimination, dispassion, enquiry, reflection on the Self, devotion, seclusion and study of vedantic literature, and by renunciation, sannyas and Self-realisation.

Hatred

This is the deadliest foe of an aspirant. It is an inveterate enemy. It is an old-standing associate of the jiva. Aversion, contempt, prejudice, sneering, taunting, teasing, ridiculing, mocking, frowning and showing wry face are all forms of hatred.

Hatred bubbles out again and again. It is insatiable like lust or greed. It may temporarily subside for sometime, and may again burst out with redoubled force. If the father hates a man, his sons and daughters also begin to hate that man without any rhyme or reason whatsoever, although that man has not done them any wrong or injustice. Such is the force of hatred. If any one even remembers the figure of a man who has done him some serious injury some forty years ago, at once hatred creeps into his mind immediately and his face shows clear signs of enmity and hatred.

An Englishman hates an Irishman and an Irishman hates an Englishman. This is communal hatred. A Catholic hates a Protestant and a Protestant hates a Catholic. This is religious hatred.

One man hates another man at first sight without any reason. A son hates his father and sues him in the court. The wife divorces her husband. This has come to stay even in India. Pure love is unknown in this world amongst worldly people. Selfishness, jealousy, greed and lust are retinues of hatred. In kali-yuga the force of hatred is augmented.

Hatred develops by repetition of thoughts of hatred. It ceases not by hatred, but only by love. Hatred needs prolonged and intense treatment, as it branches ramify in various directions in the subconscious mind. It lurks in different corners. Constant selfless service combined with meditation for a period of twelve years is necessary for its eradication.

Pure unselfish love should be cultivated. One should have fear of God. Solomon says: "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Service and feeling that everything is God can remove hatred completely and bring in realisation of oneness of life.

Prejudice, contempt, etc., will completely vanish by selfless service.

Vedanta when put into actual practice in daily life can eradicate all sorts of hatred. There is one Self hidden in all beings, so why do you hate others? Why do you frown at others? Why do you treat others with contempt? Why do you divide and separate? Realise the unity of life and consciousness and feel Atman everywhere. Rejoice and radiate love and peace everywhere.

FOR HOUSEHOLDERS

Hindu Ladies

In India, religion is maintained by the ladies only. There is a peculiar religious instinct in them. Hindu ladies are highly devotional. They infuse the religious spirit in the males through their daily conduct and practical life. They get up in the early morning, wash the house, take bath, do japa, make a small temple in their house, and there keep pictures of the Lord and their puja vessels.

They keep the place sacred, and in the evening do arati and prayer. The atheistic male members of the house are forced to do some prayer or other through their influence, on account of fear. In reality, the ladies of the house govern the house. They are the manifestations of shakti. The husband is not entitled to do any religious rite without the wife's presence by his side.

"Where women are honoured, there gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, there no sacred rite is fruitful." (Manu Smriti III-56). Such is the glory of Hindu ladies. My earnest prayer is that they should sing the names of the Lord in the early morning as soon as they get up. They should train their children also to sing the names of God.

The whole house will be charged with spiritual vibrations. Even when they cook and draw water from the wells they should be singing in mild tone the name of the Lord. A strong habit of singing the names of the Lord will be formed in two months.

Advice to Ladies

Ladies can have darshan of God easily if they turn their minds towards the spiritual path, as the element of love is predominant in them. Affection is more developed in them. The intense yearning of the heart to attain God is love or supreme devotion. Mira and the gopis of Brindavan had this love.

They completely lost themselves in Lord Krishna, forgetting their home, husband and children. They were unconscious of their body.

Mira was driven from the palace by her husband when she was very young. Did the Lord not take care of her? When she was about to drown herself in a river according to the orders of her cruel husband, the Lord held her up on His lap. Will He not do the same thing for you? Have full trust in Him and be at ease.

Devotion to husband is the greatest form of worship for women.

It is the one great religion for them. The husband may be wretched, poor, diseased or old, but those who wish to attain eternal bliss should serve their husband with intense faith and love. Grace, modesty and chastity (pativrata dharma) are the fundamental virtues of a lady. Savitri and Anasuya were ideal married women.

Ladies should follow their example.

It is better to copy the good from everybody. The West has something to learn from the East and vice-versa. There are many virtues in an Englishman. Indian boys, instead of imbibing the virtues of an Englishman, have absorbed many vile habits only.

Many Hindu ladies, on account of so-called modern civilisation, have unsexed themselves and become more masculine. They have lost their grace and modesty.

Yoga is not only for the learned - it is for all. Ladies can practise yoga, can practise asanas and pranayama. They can attain success in yoga rapidly if they once make a firm resolve and develop dispassion. Even a little understanding and practice of yoga will render life easier to bear and death easier to face.

Impressions strike deep root in the brain of the foetus that dwells in the womb. If the pregnant woman does japa and kirtan, if she studies religious books and leads a pious life during pregnancy, the foetus is endowed with spiritual impressions and is born as a child with spiritual inclinations.

Worldly-minded people desire children. This is a strong desire. Children are the source of miseries of all sorts. Have discrimination. Destroy this desire for a son. Desire God and God alone. You will get everything there. You will get complete satisfaction in God only.

Advice to Householders

Start the pure life of a yogi the very day on which you read these lines. Give no leniency to the mind. Self-reliance is indispensable.

You can get suggestions from outside, but you will have to tread the path yourself, to place each step yourself in the spiritual ladder. You will have to train your wife also. She also will have to do rigid sadhana; mere gossipping will not do. If she serves the husband nicely and takes care of his body with the right mental attitude and gives him food and drink as soon as he comes down from meditation, she can have Self-realisation in and through the form of her husband alone, like Savitri in Satyavan, Anasuya in Atri.

That house is a miserable place, a veritable hell on earth, wherein the husband moves up in spirituality and the wife pulls him down in sensual grooves, and vice versa. They should be harmoniously blended or joined by the thread of the knowledge of the Self, each aspiring eagerly for attaining God-consciousness. That house is really heaven where the husband and wife lead an ideal divine life, singing God's name, repeating His mantra 200 malas daily, studying Ramayana and Bhagavatam, controlling the senses and serving bhaktas and sannyasins.

Just as you have no passion when you look at your mother, so also Lord Krishna did 'rasa-lila' (cosmic dance) with the gopis in Brindavan without any passion. The secret teaching of rasa-lila is that people can attain salvation while doing various activities in the world and enjoying in the sense-universe, by fixing the mind at the lotus feet of the Lord and by surrendering all the fruits of actions at His lotus feet, unconditionally.

The ignorant worldly man has intense clinging or attachment and love for his wife, children, friends, relatives, house, property, cows, wealth, gardens, dress, gold, bungalows, money. A devotee has a tremendous clinging or attachment or love for God and God alone. He lives for Him alone, he works for Him alone. Renunciation is mental. Renunciation brings peace. There is no loss in renunciation. You renounce the illusory sense pleasure to get supreme, eternal bliss and immortality. Bear this in mind. Do not be guided and influenced by public opinion. March boldly and cheerfully in the path of truth, consulting your inner conscience and hearing the inner, small, shrill, sweet

voice of the soul. Do not behasty in doing any outward renunciation. The world is the best teacher. Unfold the divinity by remaining in the world alone.

Sow the Spiritual Seed in Youth

Devotion has absolutely nothing to do with age, caste, position, rank or sex. Generally men of the world say, "We will practise meditation, devotion, etc., when we retire from service." This is a serious mistake. How can you do serious spiritual sadhana after all your energy is squeezed out in service, etc.? You can hardly even sit for fifteen minutes. You have not got the strength to discipline your senses. The spiritual seed of devotion must be sown in your heart when you are young, when your heart is tender and untainted, then only will it strike a deep root, blossom and bear fruit when you become old and retire from service. Then only will you not be afraid of Yama, the god of death. You will meet him with a smile.

Foolish parents do not allow their sons who have devotional temperaments to do any sort of spiritual practises at home. They put serious obstacles in their way, as they are afraid that they will leave their houses and take to sannyasa. If their son reads Bhagavad Gita or any other religous book the parents prevent him from doing so.

For all beings a human birth is difficult to obtain, more so is a male body, rarer still is the attachment to the spiritual path and still more rare is realisation. There are three things which are rare indeed and which are due to the grace of God: a human birth, the longing for darshan of Hari, and the protecting care of a realised bhagavata (one who has attained God-realisation through bhakti). The man having by some means obtained human birth with a male body and with mastery of the Vedas in addition, is foolish if he does not exert for God-realisation. He verily commits suicide, for he kills himself by clinging to things unreal. What greater fool is there than the man who neglects to achieve the real end of this life? Let people quote scriptures, let them wander about the world visiting the four dhamas (Badrinarayana, Dwaraka, Puri and Rameshwar) wearing a single cloth, there is no liberation for any one without the direct darshan of the Lord. There is no hope of immortality by means of riches. The man of understanding and faith should strive his best for God-

realisation (having renounced his desire for pleasures from external Objects) duly approach a good, generous, realised bhagavata and fix his mind at the lotus feet of the Lord.

AVATARAS

Whenever there is a wide-scale catastrophe on earth, whenever righteousness decays and unrighteousness prevails, when the undivine forces seem to be stronger than the divine forces, when the word of God or commandments of His messengers are forgotten or disobeyed, when religious fanaticism follows the letter of the scriptures - thus killing their spirit - it is then that the Lord incarnates Himself on earth to save man and to save righteousness. He takes human form when He comes down on the physical plane.
He is called an avatara.
Says Lord Krishna: "*Whenever there is decay of righteousness, then I Myself come forth. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age.*"
There is descent of God for the ascent of man. The aim of every avatara is to save the world from some great danger, to destroy the wicked and protect the virtuous.
The advent of an avatara, the incarnation of God upon earth, is a law of nature. This law is the same at all times, everywhere. Some ignorant persons object: "How can the unborn God assume a human form? How can the Ruler be limited in a perishable, human body? How can the Lord, who stands as the Witness only, put on a finite body?" These are all vain, worthless, illogical discussions. The doctrine of avatara-hood is perfectly rational, logical and tenable. God is the Indweller, the Inner Self of all beings. He is not an absentee landlord of this world. He is not an extra-cosmic or super-cosmic deity. He pervades and permeates all atoms and the whole universe. He is the Lord of the breath, mind and all organs. In Him we live, move and have our very being. Some people say: "How can we take Krishna as the Lord, or Bhagavan? He took birth and died. He is only a man." This is a false statement. It is the

utterance of an ignorant child. Lord Krishna only manifested Himself, for the time being, to effect the solidarity and well-being of humanity, and then disappeared. Lord Krishna is Lord Hari Himself. There is no doubt of this.
Lord Rama is the Supreme Soul, the Indweller, the protector of all beings. He is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He is Lord Hari. He was never born, he never died. Lord Hari simply manifested in the form of Rama to work for the welfare of the world and then vanished.
Lord Rama and Lord Krishna had no physical bodies. Their bodies were not made of the five elements. They had divine forms.
They had bodies of consciousness, though to all appearances it looked like flesh. They had no real birth and death like human beings. They appeared and disappeared, just as a yogi does. Their bodies were not left in this world.
Just as a tailor who makes coats for others can make a coat for himself also, God, who has created bodies for others, can create a body for Himself as well. There is no difficulty. He is omnipotent and omniscient. As He has control over maya, He is fully conscious of His divine nature though He assumes a form. Still He is infinite and unconditioned.
Sometimes, the king visits the jail and enters the cell of a prisoner to see how matters are getting on in the prison. He does this for the good of the prisoners. He is quite independent, and yet out of his own free will he himself enters the cell. Even so, an avatara puts on a body out of His own free will for the ascent of man. He is quite independent like the king, while the jiva is a slave of nescience (avidya, as long as he has no Self-realisation.

Akbar's Four Questions

The Muslim Emperor Akbar had a Hindu minister named Birbal. Akbar was well versed in the Hindu religious scriptures. One day he asked Birbal the following four questions: "Where does God hi? What is His duty? lovin four quesao? Why does He take human form although He can do everything by mere willing?"
Birbal replied: "God is all-pervading. He gives His darshan to the holy devotees in their hearts. You can see Him in your heart. He pulls down those

who are on a high level and elevates those who are fallen. His duty is to cause constant change. He eats the ego of the jivas."
Birbal then asked Akbar to give him some time for thinking out a suitable reply to his fourth question. He then went to the nurse who was nursing the child of Akbar, and told her: "Look here, you will have to help me today in this matter. I will have to give a proper answer to Akbar on a certain philosophical question. When Akbar comes and sits by the side of the pond to play with the child, hide the child in a certain place and bring this toy-child. Take the toy-child near the pond and pretend to tumble down and throw it into the pond. Then you will see the fun. Do the whole thing dexterously. I know you can do it well." He gave her ten rupees as a present. She was highly delighted, and at once agreed to do so.
Akbar returned from his evening walk as usual, and sat on a bench by the side of the pond. He then asked the nurse to bring the child. The nurse slowly went by the side of the pond, pretended to tumble down, and threw the toy-child into the pond. Akbar at once hastened to jump down into the pond to rescue the child. Birbal intervened and said: "Here is your child. Do not be hasty."
Akbar was very much annoyed at the impertinent behaviour of Birbal and ordered him to be punished. Birbal said: "I have now given a practical answer to your fourth question. Why are you angry towards me? Even though there are so many servants to rescue your child, out of affection for the child you yourself wanted to jump into the water. Even so, although God can accomplish everything by mere willing, yet He comes Himself out of love for His devotee to give them His darshan."
Akbar was very much pleased. He gave Birbal rich presents of a shawl and a diamond ring.

The Ten Avataras of Vishnu and the Twenty-four Lila Avataras

The Bhagavata Purana is a chronicle of the various avataras of Lord Vishnu. They are: Matsya (the Fish), Kurma (the Tortoise), Varaha (the Boar), Narasimha (the Man-lion), Vamana (the Dwarf), Parasurama (Rama with the axe), Ramachandra (Hero of the Ramayana), Sri Krishna, Buddha (the Prince-

ascetic, founder of Buddhism), and Kalki (the Hero on a white horse who is to come at the end of the Kali Yuga).

The object of the Matsya Avatara was to save Vaivasvata Manu from destruction by a deluge. The object of the Kurma Avatara was to enable the world to recover some precious things which were lost in the deluge. The Tortoise gave its back for keeping the churning-rod when the gods and the asuras churned the ocean of milk. The purpose of the Varaha Avatara was to rescue the earth from the waters after it had been dragged down by a demon named Hiranyaksha. The purpose of Narasimha Avatara, half-lion and half-man,

was to free the world from the oppression of

Hiranyakasipu, a demon who was the father of Prahlada. The object of Vamana Avatara was to restore the power of the gods which had been eclipsed by the penance and devotion of King Bali. The object of Parasurama Avatara was to deliver the country from the oppression of the kshatriya rulers. Parasurama destroyed the kshatriya race twenty-one times. The object of Rama Avatara was to destroy the wicked Ravana. The object of Sri Krishna Avatara was to destroy Kamsa and other demons, to deliver His wonderful message of the Bhagavad Gita, and to become the centre of the bhakti schools in India. The object of Buddha Avatara was to prohibit animal sacrifices. The object of the Kalki Avatara, who will appear before the end of the Kali Yuga, is the destruction of the wicked and the re-establishment of virtue.

In addition to these ten avataras there are fourteen others. All together they are called the twenty-four Lila Avataras.

1. Yagna, born of Ruchi and Akuti. The Suyama Devas were born of Yagna. He removed the fears of Triloki.
2. Kapila, born of Kardama Prajapati and his wife Devahuti. He founded the Sankhya system of philosophy

and taught Brahma-vidya to his mother.

3. Dattatreya, the avatara of the three murtis —Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.
4. The Kumaras — Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara — the four mental sons of Brahma. They retired into the forest for tapas and meditation as virgin Youths, and attained Self-realisation. They disseminated Brahma-vidya or knowledge of the Self.

5. Nara-Narayana, born of Dharma and his wife Murti, daughter of Daksha. They practised intense tapas in Badrinarayana. Celestial nymphs could not allure them.
6. Dhruva, a boy-devotee like Prahlada. Not able to bear the words of his step-mother, he went into the forest and did severe tapas. He received the twelve-syllabled mantra Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya from Narada and had direct darshan of Lord Hari. He attained Dhruvaloka (the region of the pole star).
7. Prithu, who took out riches and eatables from the earth.
8. Rishabha, born of Nabhi and Sudevi (Meru Devi). He roamed about as a paramahamsa.
9. Hayagriva. This horse-headed avatara appeared in the vedic yagna and promulgated the Vedas.
10. Hari, who saved the elephant King Gajendra.
11. Hamsa, who narrated bhakti yoga, jnana and Bhagavata Purana to Rishi Narada.
12. The presiding deity of each Manvantara.
13. Dhanvantari,
who disseminated the science of
medicine (ayurveda).
14. Vyasa, who narrated the Vedas and set them in order. He wrote the eighteen Puranas.

Degree of the Lord's Manifestations

The rishis of yore have expounded the doctrine that the Lord of the universe exists in sixteen expanding kalas or digits of manifestation, that one digit of His life manifests in the vegetable kingdom, two in the animal, and from five to eight in the human - according as we pass from the savage at one end of the scale to the highest evolved state at the other. The Lord's manifestation in His avataras ranges from nine to sixteen digits or rays. The full or purna-avataras are those in who all sixteen rays are present. Lord Krishna was a purna-avatara with sixteen rays. Lord Rama was an avatara of fourteen rays, he was an amsa-avatara or partial avatara.

There are also maya-guna avataras. In creation these maya-guna avataras are tapas, Brahma, the rishis and the nine Prajapatis.
In preservation, they are dharma, Vishnu, Manu, devas and kings.
In pralaya (destruction) they are adharmas, Siva, serpent and asuras.

God-realisation Through Worship of Avataras

You can attain God-realisation through worship of avataras like Lord Krishna and Lord Rama. Many have already attained God-realisation in this manner. Tukaram, Ram Das, Sur Das, Mira Bai and Tulsi Das have thus seen God face to face. Their powerful writings bespeak their high spiritual attainments.
Worship Lord Rama or Lord Krishna at all times, with all your heart and with all your mind. Glorify Him in your heart. He will soon reveal Himself to you and you will feel His Presence. You will attain immortality and eternal bliss.
God reveals Himself to His devotees in a variety of ways. He assumes the very form which the devotee has chosen for his worship. If you worship Him as Lord Hari with four hands, He will come to you as Hari. If you adore Him as Siva, He will give you darshan as Siva. If you worship Him as Mother Durga or Kali, He will come to you as Durga or Kali. If you worship Him as Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, or Lord Dattatreya, He will come to you as Rama, Krishna or Dattatreya. If you worship Him as Christ or Allah, he will come to you as Christ or Allah.
The philosophy of Jesus Christ, the yogi of Nazareth, is the best of its kind for the European world, as is the philosophy of Buddha for Thailand, China, Japan and Ceylon. So is the philosophy of Mohammed for Arabia. All are the sons of God made in His image to give to the different parts of the great wide world a message of peace and of the secret of life. All are aspects of one Ishvara or Lord.
Under whatever name and form, it is Ishvara who is adored. Worship goes to the Indweller, the Lord in the form. It is ignorance to think that one form is superior to another. All forms are one and the same. All are adoring the same Lord. The differences are only differences of names due to differences in the worshippers, but not in the object of adoration.

The real Jesus or Krishna is in your own heart. He lives there for ever. He is your Indweller. He is your partner always. There is no friend like the Indweller. Resort to Him, take refuge in Him.
Realise Him and be free.

Contact with Avataras

Some people want to have contact with avataras without beins endowed with proper qualifications. Even if an avatara appears before you, you will not be able to find Him out. You have not got the eyes to see Him as such. You will take Him for an ordinary man only. How many were able to detect the divinity of Lord Krishna? Did Jarasandha, Sishupala and Duryodhana recognize Him as the avatara of Lord Hari? Very few people, like Bhishma, recognized Lord Krishna as the avatara. That is the reason why the Lord says: "The foolish disregard Me when clad in human semblance, ignorant of My supreme nature, the great Lord of beings." (Bhagavad Gita IX: 11) It is only a saint who can understand a saint. Only a Jesus can understand a Jesus. How can a patient know the merits of a doctor? A neophyte or beginner in the spiritual path should prepare himself gradually. He must get spiritual instructions from spiritual teachers and follow them strictly. He should make himself fit to approach a spiritual guru, to practise meditation and to see the Lord in meditation.
If you are endowed with the four means for salvation; if you have burning dispassion like that of Lord Buddha or Rajah Bhartrihari; if you possess forgiveness and patience like the Avanti brahmin of Ujjain; if you have devotion to the preceptor like Trotaka or Padmapada; if you can serve like Florence Nightingale; if you can obey like a soldier in the battle-field; if you can be generous like Ranti Deva; if you can spend sleepless nights in devotion to the Lord, like Mira; if you can do tapas like Dhruva; if you can stick to your convictions like Mansoor and Shams Tabriez; if you can be fearless like the sage who met Alexander the Great on the banks of the river Indus, you will have Self-realisation this very second! You will contact avataras and full-blown yogis this very second. First deserve and then desire.

Pseudo Avataras

Pseudo-avataras are abundant these days. They have cropped up like mushrooms. Their disciples pompously advertise these avataras as bhagavans, torch-bearers, perfect masters, adepts, etc., for collecting money and building ashrams for their own comfortable living. They get their downfall also soon. All that glitters is not gold. People have now lost faith in these charlatans. Truth alone can get victory. How long can falsehood stand? The pseudo-avataras dress themselves as Lord Krishna with crown and peacock feathers on their heads and appear before credulous disciples and say: "I am Lord Krishna. Drink the water which has bathed my feet. I shall give you liberation."

Any saint who wants to rise up should not allow his disciples to advertise. Otherwise he will lose his respect soon. These pseudo-avataras who live in the midst of utter darkness but profess themselves to be wise and learned, go round and round deluded in many crooked ways, as blind people led by the blind.

Future Avataras

Who can comprehend the secrets and mysteries of avataras and where, when and in what manner and in how many forms the Lord is sporting. It is the genuine tears of a devotee that trickle down from his cheeks out of intense longing that bring the descent of the Lord in the form of an avatara. How powerful is a devotee, how potent is his tapas.

There is a grand possibility of the descent of God in human form as an avatara. This has occurred several times in the past and will continue to occur in future as well. There are some premonitary signs that indicate the advent of an avatara. The ground is well-prepared for His descent. People take interest in sankirtan and some pious people disseminate sankirtan bhakti far and wide. Some great souls are born beforehand and train people in selfless service and right conduct.

In the divine scheme of things avataras are indispensable for the uplift of humanity. In this Kali Yuga, Kalki-avatara is expected.

May He bring supreme joy and peace to the world!

LORD KRISHNA AND HIS TEACHINGS

Lord Krishna was born in Mathura, which is situated on the banks of the beautiful Yamuna, in Uttar Pradesh. He showed superhuman physical strength and very mysterious powers on various occasions even as a boy. He killed many wild beasts and birds and is especially famous for killing the demon-snake called Kaliya which used to live in the waters of the Yamuna. He organised several kinds of plays, games and picnics in the gardens and shady retreats of Brindavan for the amusement of the maids and boys of Gokula. He gradually gave up all his boyish pranks and soon turned out to be a most astute statesman when he reached the age of adolescence. He became a powerful and able ruler and had much to do in the field of politics.

At the holy hermitage of Rishi Sandipani, he and his brother Balarama learnt philosophy and theology, science and politics, and several other arts such as archery, etc. He settled up all internal dissensions that were rending the country from one corner to another. He chastised Kamsa and Jarasandha for their tyranny, and restored peace and order in place of bloodshed and misery. Lord Krishna was a statesman of a very superior order. He was a reformer, a yogi and a jnani to boot. He was a master of vajroli mudra. He was a bala-brahmachari (celibate) though he lived in the midst of gopis. His love towards the gopis was one of divine type. It was not physical love. How can you expect carnality in a young boy?

He always identified Himself with formless (nirguna) Brahman and used His mind and body as His instruments in worldly activity. He was a witness of nature's activities.

Lord Krishna is popularly known as "Bansiwala. When He played on the flute it conveyed a different, divine message altogether to the gopis (the incarnations of the classical devatas). It was not a mere musical sound 'Kling' is the bija akshara and mantra of Lord Krishna. It is a powerful mantra. It produces a powerful vibration in the mental stuff and transforms the rajasic

nature of the mind. It produces a certain kind of powerful spiritual idea in the mind, and greatly helps purification of mind, concentration and contemplation. It induces dispassion and one-pointed mind and attenuates the force of subtle desires and innate tendencies. It completely checks the thought-force. It produces rhythmical vibrations of the five sheaths. (I would strongly advise you to study Woodroffe's 'Garland of Letters' to understand fully the efficacy of bija akshara and mantra.)

The following is the 'mahamantra' of Lord Krishna. It is found in the Gopala Tapani Upanishad. Those who repeat this mantra 18 lakhs of times with concentration, pure intention and intense faith, will doubtless have direct darshan of Lord Krishna. It is of 18 syllables.

Om Kling Krishnaya Govindaya
Gopijana Vallabhaya svaha

'Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya' is a twelve-syllabled mantra of Lord Krishna. Dhruva repeated this mantra and obtained His darshan. Repeat 12 lakhs of times. Even ladies can repeat this mantra.

You need not go to Brindavan to have the darshan of Lord Krishna. Your own heart is the real Brindavan. You will have to search Him in the Brindavan of your heart. Rukmini and Radha are the two powers (of activity and knowledge) of Lord Krishna, Arjuna is the jiva and Kurukshetra is the battlefield within. The real battle is the one with the mind, senses, innate tendencies and thought of sensual objects, and one's own innate nature. Draupadi is the mind,

Pandavas

are the senses, gopis are the nerves or nadis and enjoyment with gopis is enjoyment of bliss of the Atman by controlling the various nerves. This is the esoteric exposition.

Just as Lord Dattatreya is still moving about with his astral body in the reputed Girnar hills and gives darshan even now to his sincere bhaktas, just as Sri Jnana Dev is still moving about with his astral body in Alandi near Poona and gives darshan even now to his sincere devotees, so also Lord Krishna is

still moving about in Brindavan and gives darshan to his sincere bhaktas even now.

The Bhagavad Gita contains the teachings of the Lord Krishna.

It is a wonderful book for constant study. Aspirants should study this book daily with great care. The first six chapters deal with karma yoga, the next six chapters deal with bhakti yoga and the last six chapters deal with jnana yoga. Lord Krishna summarised His teachings in the following words in the 12th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita: "Place thy mind in Me, into Me let thy reason enter, then without doubt thou shalt abide in Me hereafter. But if thou art not able firmly to fix thy mind on Me, then by the yoga of practice seek to reach Me, O Dhananjaya. If also thou art not equal to constant practice, be intent on My service; performing actions for My sake, thou shalt attain perfection. If even to do this thou hast not strength, then taking refuge in union with Me, renounce all fruit of action, with the self controlled." (XII:8-11)

Act, but act only with devotion to God without desire for fruits.

Is this impossible? Sri Krishna said: "No." I shall explain His words by quoting an example. The soldiers in an army fight — they kill men and are killed, but they act without any desire, without any mind. They are under the orders of their general. They know not what they do. They move, they march, they run, they fire, but they know not for what object. They are like dolls in the hands of their general. They do what they are commanded to do. Their lives, their objects, their desires are all in their general's hand. To obey their general's command is their duty, and in performing it they give their own lives or take the lives of others — the others sometimes being their dearest or their nearest relatives. They know that whatever they do under orders from their general must be good - good for them and good for the country and the cause for which they fight. Their minds, with their conscience and all, are placed in the hands of their general. From this illustration it is evident that it is not impossible to act without desires and without mind. It is possible only when man fully depends upon another. If I know that I am not responsible for my acts, if I know that I have a General under whose orders I act and who will be responsible for all my acts, if I know I am not to think for myself, that I have got one who will think for me and make me do that which would be good to me — surely I can go on acting without troubling myself in any way. Surely in

such a case I can act without any desires whatsoever and without any mind and anything else I possess.
Sri Krishna asked man to consider himself a doll in the hand of God. He asked man to think of himself as a soldier, God as his great General and his worldly acts as duties under orders. He asked him to act on the faith and belief that whatever he does is the work of God.
He said: "Abandoning all dharmas, take refuge in Me alone. I will liberate thee from all sins; grieve not." Bhagavad Gita (XVIII:66).
I shall conclude with the last sloka of the 18th chapter: "Wherever there is Krishna the Lord of Yoga, wherever there is Arjuna the archer, there are prosperity, victory and happiness. Such is my conviction." Bhagavad Gita (XVIII-78)

Gopis' Love For Krishna

Some ignorant people say: "Krishna is not the Lord. He is not an avatar. He is a passionate cowherd who lustfully played with the gopis." What was the age of Lord Krishna at that time? Was He not a young boy? Can there be a tinge of passion in Him? Who can understand the secret of rasa lila and madhurya bhava, the culmination of highest bhakti or total surrender to the Lord? It is only Narada, Suka Deva, Chaitanya, Mira, Hafiz, Ramananda and the gopis who could understand the secret of rasa lila. Did He not play miracles when He was a boy? Did He not show the universe to His mother when He was a baby? Did he not show that he was an avatar of Lord Hari? Did He not kill the Kaliya serpent by standing on its hood? Did He not multiply as countless Krishnas? Who were the gopis? Were they not God-intoxicated beings who saw themselves also as Krishna? The sound of the flute could throw them in a state of divine ecstasy or holy communion. They were above body-consciousness. Lord Krishna snatched away their clothes and rendered them nude. There is a great philosophy in this.
He taught them: "O gopis! Have no attachment for anything. Give up the body idea and sex idea and attain to the bodiless and sexless Immortal Atman."
The gopis of Brindavan were wonderful devotees of the Lord.

They totally surrendered themselves unto Him. They blended with Krishna through their intense love. The love they bore towards Krishna was divine love. Lord Krishna played on His flute on a moonlit night. The gopis rushed forth immediately to where their Lover was. Their minds were absorbed in Krishna. They forgot everything when they heard the flute. Some left their houses while milking the cow, some when they were serving their husbands with food, some did not take down the boiled rice from the fire, some did not wait till the milk got boiled. Some had been giving milk to their children, some were taking food, some were serving the guests with food, but they all left their work half-finished. Their clothes, hair and ornaments were all dishevelled. They ran to behold Sri Krishna.

Krishna was their very prana and soul. They could not bear His separation even for a second! How devoted the gopis were. Can you imagine? It is beyond all imagination.

When Lord Krishna suddenly disappeared they roamed from forest to forest. They asked the trees if they had seen their Lover.

They enquired of the creepers, the earth and the deer. They imitated His actions and even called themselves Krishna. All their thoughts were directed towards Krishna only. They conversed about Him only. They were full of Krishna, they were immersed in His love. They had no other thoughts, no other aspirations. They did not think of their homes or relatives. They went to the banks of the Yamuna and sang in chorus about Krishna and prayed fervently for His return.

Pleased with their devotion, Krishna suddenly appeared before them and addressed them thus: "Welcome, ye great ones! What good can I do for you? Are all safe in Vraja? Tell me the object of your coming here. The night is fearful and wild animals are roaming around. Go back to Vraja. This is not the place for women. You have got your mothers, fathers, sons, brothers and husbands. They are searching for you. Do not cause pain to anybody. What is more, you have now seen this forest adorned with flowers and illumined by the tender rays of the full moon where the trees and their tender branches gently moved by the breeze from the Yamuna, stand in all their splendour. Now go back, O virtuous girls, speedily to your house, and look after your husbands. The calves and your children are weeping. Go and let them have

their drink. If you have come here, forced by your love for Me, it is only meet and proper; for all people have their love for Me. Devotion to husband is the one great religion for women. They should seck the well-being of their friends and bring up their children. The husband may be wicked, old, diseased or poor, but those who wish for heaven should not give up their husbands. The connection with one who is not the husband is disreputable and unbecoming. You may bear love for Me in other ways than by such a near approach. Therefore go back to your houses."

The gopis were struck dumb for a time. They were overcome with sorrow. They had given up everything for the sake of Krishna and they could ill bear to hear these harsh words. At last they broke forth: "O Lord, it is not for Thee to utter these unkind words. We have given up all objects and sought Thy feet. O Thou, difficult to be reached, do not forsake us. Thou speakest, O Love, of our duties to husbands, sons and friends as if Thou wert a religious teacher, but Thou art Thyself the goal of those religious injunctions. So let them rest in Thee. Thou art the greatest friend of all beings, for Thou art verily their own Self. What do we care for husbands or sons, sources of misery as they are? We are attached to Thee, the constant source of happiness."

In these words the gopis expressed their deepest affection for Lord Krishna. We find in the gopis complete self-surrender in its true sense. They cared not even for their lives. How could they care then for their relatives, friends and cattle?

If you want to attain Krishna, you must serve Him as a gopi.

You must adore Him with the mental attitude of a gopi. The devotee who worships Krishna with that attitude enjoys the madhurya rasa.

Lord Krishna, who incarnated for the sake of eradicating evil and protecting righteousness, could not be associated with the sexual instinct or passion towards the gopis. He is the slave of His devotees.

Through bhakti alone we can obtain the grace of the Lord and cross the ocean of samsara. Let us sing Lord Krishna's name: **"Om Sri Krishna Govinda Hare Murare Hare Natha Narayana Vasudeva."** Let us ever remember this mantra of the Bhagavatam which can confer on us supreme peace and eternal bliss: "Prostrations lo Thee O Hari, the supreme Lord, O Govinda, O Krishna,

the son of Vasudeva (the Inner Ruler of all beings) who removes the afflictions of those who prostrate unto Thee."
No man is a perfect male and no woman is a perfect female.
There is always a mixture of masculine and feminine qualities in both. There are some males in whom the feminine elements are predominant in their character. Examples are many in the world.
Even so no man is absolutely rational or absolutely emotional. There is a mixture of both. One may be more rational, and in him the faculty of reason may be more developed; another may be more emotional and in him the heart may be more developed. Some foolish, dry vedantins who pose as great advaitins dislike sankirtan and speak ill of sankirtan and dance. Swami Rama Tirtha, a fine example of a vedantin, danced in Brahmapuri forests with bells tied to his ankles when he was in divine ecstatic mood. He had a harmonious combination of head and heart. Lord Gouranga was a genius. He was a master of logic. He also danced and did sankirtan.
He developed his head and his heart.
Dance is an exact science. It is physical and spiritual. The founders of this science are Lord Krishna and Lord Siva. In your dance you will have to exhibit the six bhavas of creation, destruction, movement, stability, knowledge and ignorance. Mark how Lord Krishna stands with flute in His hands showing these six bhavas. O dry, one-sided vedantins, give up cavilling! Learn to be wise. Give up dry, idle talking. Develop head, heart and hand and attain perfection. There is no iota of hope for your salvation till you develop your heart. Dear friends, bear this in mind always!

Krishna's Flute

Krishna's flute is the symbol of freedom or OM. He has preached divine love through His flute. He has created this world out of the sound Omkara that proceeds from His flute. He stands on the right big toe. This signifies the Upanishadic utterance: "One without a second." He shows three curves while standing. This represents the three gunas by which he has created this world. He gazes at Radha and gives life to nature. He is the primum mobile. The lotus which supports Him stands for the universe.

Radha asked Krishna: "O My dear! Why do you love the flute more than me? What virtuous actions has it done so that it can remain in close contact with your lips? Kindly explain to me, my Lord, the secret of this. I am eager to hear." Sri Krishna said: "This flute is very dear to Me. It has got some wonderful virtues. It emptied itself of its egoism before I began to play. It has made its inner hollow quite void and I can bring out any kind of tune, raga or ragini, to my pleasure and sweet will. If you also behave towards Me in exactly the same manner as this flute, if you remove your egoism completely and make perfect self-surrender, then I shall also love you in the same manner as I love this fute. '

The body also is the flute of Lord Krishna. If you can destroy your egoism and make total, unreserved, self-surrender to the Lord, He will play on this body-flute nicely and bring out melodious tunes.

Your will will become merged in His Will. He will work unhampered through your instruments — body, mind and senses.

You can rest very peacefully then without cares, worries and anxieties, you can watch the play of the universe as a witness. Then your sadhana will go on by leaps and bounds, because the divine will or divine grace itself will work through you. You need not do any sadhana at all. But make the self-surrender from the core of your heart with all your being. Learn the lesson from the flute, and follow its ways. If you have done complete surrender at the lotus feet of Lord Krishna you have already reached the realm of peace, the kingdom of immortality, the dominion of eternal bliss and everlasting sunshine. You have found out a joy that never fades, a life that never decays nor dies. You have reached the other shore of fearlessness which is beyond darkness, doubt, grief, sorrow, pain and delusion.

When you worship Lord Krishna with the feeling that He is the support for this universe, it is called tadasraya bhakti. Just as lotus Nower and swans depend upon a lake of water for the keeping up of their very lives, so also the devotee depends upon Lord Krishna for the maintenance of his very life. He feels that Lord Krishna is his all protecting Lord.

Next comes tadrupa bhakti. Just as a fish is deeply immersed in water and it cannot live when it is taken out of water, so also the bhakta is immersed in the Lord through intense worship and meditation. He cannot remain without Him

even for a second. This is sarupya mukti (liberation where one attains the form of the Lord).

Doomes one with the fire, saylso the deust as camper her burne The third stage is tanmaya bhakti. Just as camphor when burnt Lord. The meditator and the meditated, the thinker and the thought, the worshipper and the worshipped, become one and the In the beginning the ignorant devotee says, "I am His". When he grows in bhakti he says, "I am Thine". When he develops tanmaya bhakti he exclaims in joy with rapturous ecstasy and delight, "I am Thou". The gopis who were searching for Lord Krishna in the grove of Brindavan eventually became Krishna themselves (like the analogy of wasp and caterpillar) when they developed tanmaya bhakti.

O my dear children of immortality! Lord Krishna is still roaming about in the gullies of Brindavan. You can find Him there if you really want Him. He is the unprecedented monarch of the three worlds. He is waiting with outstretched hands to embrace you with His warm love in His sweet bosom as He did with Mira, Sur Das and others in days of yore. Purify your mind and destroy your evil desires and egoism. Hear once more the flute of the Bhansiwala of Brindavan. Hear His Immortal Song of the Bhagavad Gita and allow Him to play on this body-flute of yours. Call him fervently with single-minded devotion and purity. He will appear before you.

Lose not this rare opportunity. It is very difficult to get this human body. May we hear once more the flute of Radha Krishna, the Muraliwala of Brindavan. May we hear once more the Bhagavad Gita directly from His own mouth as Arjuna had heard in days of yore. May we play with Him in close intimacy and dance in divine ecstasy like the gopis and the cowherds, and merge ourselves in Him. May we allow Lord Krishna to utilise our bodies as His flute!

May we sing His name whole-heartedly like Radha, and obtain His grace which can take us to His abode of everlasting peace and infinite bliss! May His blessings be upon us all!

Radha — The World Mother

My humble salutations and adorations to Sri Radha, the world Mother, the inseparable devoted partner of that Flute-bearer of Brindavan, who took her birth in the sacred village Barshana near Mathura, and who was an incarnation of the Goddess Lakshmi. Just as heat is inseparable from fire, just as coolness is inseparable from ice, just as shadow is inseparable from man, so is Radha inseparable from Lord Krishna. Worship of Radha is really worship of Krishna, and worship of Lord Krishna really includes worship of Radha. Radha was an embodiment of love and devotion. She had no other thought than that of Krishna. She took her birth to teach the world the true relationship of the lover and the beloved, the secret of madhurya bhava or madhurya rasa, which is the essence of vedanta only.

In the esoteric sense, heart is Brindavan, mind is Radha, gopis are the nerves and the senses, anahata sounds that proceed from the heart are the melodious songs that come out of Krishna's flute, sahasara chakra is the Supreme Abode, Lord Krishna is the Supreme Lord. The five koshas (sheaths) are the five fortresses, pranas are the gate-keepers, the chakras are the gates, immortality is the Yamuna, the crown of the head is the kadamba tree, mind melts in Brahman, Radha is united with Krishna. This is rasa-lila.

Every nerve, every atom, every cell, every tissue, every pore in the skin of the body of Radha vibrated the name of Krishna. She could never forget Him even for one millionth part of a second. She never slept at night. She was singing Lord Krishna's name throughout the night. She was a gudakeshi, one who conquered sleep like Arjuna and Lakshmana. A little sound from the flute of Krishna at dead of night would intoxicate her with Krishna-prem and would bring her out into the dense forest to hear His sweet heart-rending music of the soul, the melody of Omkara. No power on earth could stop her. She taught to the world the gist of self-surrender, the very core of the highest bhakti, the highest rung in the ladder of devotion which begins from the first step of dasya bhava (the relationship of master and servant) and culminates in complete merging by total and perfect self-surrender.

The gist of the rasa-lila is essence of devotion (para bhakti) or oneness, the merging of the lover and beloved. The secret of rasa-lila is that men or women while remaining in the world and doing all sorts of activities can develop

Krishna-prem (divine love for Krishna) and can realise Godhead at their very threshold. It teaches: "Give the mind to God, just as Radha did, and the hands to work. Sing and dance in divine ecstasy, but forget Him not."

Even the Sufis have admiration and devotion for Radha and Krishna. Their philosophy is founded on Racha devotion to Lord Krishna. They try to develop the same inner feeling which Radha had towards Lord Krishna.

Radha is Durga, Radha is Parvati, Radha is Rajeshwari. She is the world Mother. The whole world rests in Her sweet bosom. She is the creatix and generatrix of the whole universe. The whole divine play is kept up by Her. She sways the world through Her three gunas — sattva, rajas and tamas.

She is the doctor, she is the nurse, she is the medicine, she is the patient, she is the cup. These are all Her manifestations. She is dynamic Brahman. She is shakti or power. Without Her not an atom can move. She is the light in the sun, sapidity in water, shakti in electricity and will-force, fragrance in flower, beauty in flowers and the Himalayan landscape, splendour in the stars, chivalry in warriors, devotion in bhaktas, revolution in electrons. She is ignorance, delusion and knowledge. She is the Vedas. Whatever you see, hear, feel, taste and smell is Radha. There is no other thing in this world save Radha. She guides the seekers, She nourishes babies, She is the untiring gardener of the universe. Her glory is indescribable, her splendour is ineffable, her beauty, love and intelligence are unfathomable.

Without Her grace no spiritual progress is possible. Without Her grace no cultivation of devotion or darshan of Lord Krishna is possible. Control of mind can hardly be attained without Her blessing. It is She who introduces the thirsty, sincere aspirants to Lord Krishna. She Herself takes care of the sadhana of Her devotee, if he obtains Her grace. She Herself leads the devotee by holding him in Her hands.

You can meet Her even now in the Seva Kunja of Brindavan if you have sincere devotion. Even now She roams about with Lord Krishna in the gullies and kadamba forests of Brindavan, and on the banks of the Yamuna. If you have the eyes of devotion, the real inner eye of intuition, you can see Her and Her Lord also. She has got the collyrium to open your blind eyes. She dwells in the chambers of your heart. Run to Her with all love and devotion, right now this very second. Don't delay even for a second. She is waiting on the banks of the

Yamuna to embrace you with outstretched hands. Find Her out. Thirst for Her darshan, make yourself fit to approach Her lotus feet and melt in Her divine love. Purify your heart by singing Her name. Weep sincerely for Her darshan in solitude. Pray now:
"O Mother Radha! When will that blessed day come to me to sit at your lotus feet? I am Thine. All is Thine. Thy will be done, my Mother! Beloved of Lord Krishna, bless me!" Shed sincere tears of joy and love for Her. Let us sing Her name now with feeling, faith and love:

Jaya Radhe Jaya Radhe Radhe Jaya Radhe Jaya Sri Radhe
Jaya Krishna Jaya Krishna Krishna Jaya Krishna Jaya Sri Krishna

May Radha, the world Mother, the sweet untiring world nurse, help us in developing bhakti. May She guide us in our daily activities of life. May She introduce us to Her beloved Lord Krishna. May She explain to us the full secret of rasa-lila. May She train us to become qualified students to partake in the divine rasa-lila of Seva Kunja at Brindavan that is going on daily even now, and to drink the nectar of Immortality. May the blessings of Sri Radha Krishna be upon us all.

Philosophy of the Word Radha

In Brindavan people sing the name of Krishna as 'Radhe-Shyam' or 'Radhe-Krishna' in a sweet melodious tune which will pierce even the stony hearts of rank materialists, confirmed scientists, socialists and atheists.
In these two jugal (combined) names 'Radhe-Shyam' and 'Sita-Ram', Radha or Sita comes first. Radha says to bhaktas, "If you remember me, I will introduce you to your father, Lord Krishna, and get for you peace, knowledge and immortality."
There is a great deal of philosophy in the word Radha. Just imagine that there is a circle in the blackboard which stands in front of you. Within the circle the letters R a dh a are written. If you read from the lower 'a' you will make out the word as aradh (aradhy means worship). Radha says, "O Bhaktas! If you do aradhana of Lord Krishna, my sweet Beloved, if you sing His name 'Radhe-

Shyam' or 'Radhe-Krishna' with feeling and love, you will have His darshan soon and all your miseries will come to an end."
If you read from the upper 'a' you will make out the word "adhar' which means prop (support or substratum). Radha says "O Bhaktas! If you worship Lord Krishna with the feeling that He is the substratum or support for the universe, He will free you quickly from this samsaric wheel of births and deaths."
Now you read from 'dha'. You will make out the word 'dhara' which means "flow'. Radha says "I shall tell you how to worship Lord Krishna. Bhakti should flow from your hearts like dhara - continuous flow of oil or water when it is poured from one vessel to another. Your minds should be steadily fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord always, not thinking of another. Then only you will get mukti (liberation). Then alone you will have constant companionship of the Lord." This is a description of para-bhakti.
You have got the magic words 'Radha, aradhana, adhara and dhara'. Remember these four terms. This will help you to develop bhakti.

THE LOVER'S PATH

The lover's path is as difficult as that of a vedantin or a raja yogi. It demands endless patience and endurance. No path is very easy. There is no royal road in spirituality. It is only to encourage the aspirant that sages say that the path of devotion or love is the easiest.
Every path or every yoga demands the entire annihilation of egoism.
The karma yogi kills his egoism through selfless service; the bhakta kills his egoism through self-surrender at the feet of the Lord; the vedantin destroys his egoism through self-denial or self-abnegation.
How difficult it is in this world to please another man and obtain his love and affection! The husband gives the best of things to his wife, purchases for her valuable clothes and ornaments, serves her in a variety of ways, day and night, and yet he is not able to satisfy her completely. The clerk works in the office

from morning till sunset and yet he is not able to please his boss and obtain his love.
He is served with twentyfour hours notice of dismissal for a slight mistake. The dewan (prime minister) tries his level best to please the maharajah and get his love, and yet he fails to please him perfectly.
If such is the case in worldly love, what fiery ordeal must not the devotee pass through in obtaining the love of God; what sort of pains must he not patiently bear before he can enter the domain of supreme love.
If you want to have an interview with the Viceroy or the King, how difficult it is to get an appointment. The private secretary writes: His Excellency (or His Majesty) is very busy these days.
Wait for a fortnight." If you want to see the Deputy Commissioner, the orderly says "Sahib is very busy. Come the day after tomorrow." If such is the case in worldly matters, how difficult will it not be to have interview with Lord Krishna, the Lord of the three worlds?
The path of love is rugged, thorny and precipitous. It is the razor path. It is exceedingly narrow also. It can admit only one.
When there is Lord there is no 'I'. When there is 'I' there is no Lord.
Just as the acrobat walks on the thin wire, so also the aspirant walks on a thin wire. If he is careless he may trip at any moment and fall into the deep abyss below. Furthermore, maya's sword is hanging above his neck. There are crocodiles in the deep abyss below, and in the front is a big fire. There are scorpions and cobras behind. How courageous, then, the aspirant must be! But, he is always supported by the invisible hands of the Unseen.
The nectar is ever flowing from the fountain of love within the chambers of the heart. The devotee drinks it and feels the warm embrace of the Lord at every step. That is the reason why he marches in the path with undaunted spirit. Without the divine grace the battle cannot be won by him. Without His help and mercy, he cannot move an inch in the hazardous path.
Just as the first prize winner in the obstacle race comes out triumphant after passing through the drum, ring, slippery plank etc., even so the devotee has to pass through dry wilderness and cyclonic storms. He has to cross many fierce foaming streams, ascend many precipitous peaks, steer clear of many whirlpools in the stormy sea of this life and patiently bear severe

persecutions. There is no room for lamentation or despair even if there are a thousand and one difficulties. All will melt away like rent clouds or mist before the sun if the aspirant is sincere and persistent, if he has iron determination and fiery resolve, if he is regular in his prayers and worship. Eventually through the grace of the Lord the devotee or lover comes out victorious in his battle.

How courageously the man who knows fencing acts when he is pelted by stones by several people on all sides. He wards off each stone very dexterously and protects himself in a marvellous manner.

Even so, the devotee must be bold when he treads on the path of loye. The Lord will appear only when the devo tre has abandoned the sare ide or trace of egoism, when he has made complete self-surrender. He will be tested in a variety of ways. When Draupadi fully relied on the help of the Lord only, and when she totally placed herself at the feet of Sri Krishna, the Lord of Dwaraka came to her rescue immediately and multiplied her clothes.

Mira had to undergo fiery ordeals before she entered the portals of the region of supreme love where her beloved Krishna reigned in supreme splendour and glory. She underwent persecutions of all sorts. She walked barefooted in the burning sands of Rajputana, lived on alms, slept on the ground and starved continuously. In spite of these ordeals she was always in rapturous delight through the grace of the Lord.

Through the grace of the Lord the fire was converted into ice for Prahlada. Burning oil was like cool oil of sandal for him. Through the grace of Giridhari Gopal (Krishna) the cobra was converted into an idol of Krishna (saligram and garland of flowers) for Mira, poison was changed into nectar and a bed of sharp nails into a bed of roses.

The Lord's grace makes a dumb man eloquent and a lame man ascend the highest peaks of the Himalayas.

Divine love is not the selfish love of worldly-minded persons to get something from another. It is not the love to see a handsome face of a maiden or her piercing glances or her beautiful dress. It is not a temporary outburst of some vague emotion. The language of love is the language of tears. The fortunate devotee experiences only within himself this sweet love. The flame of divine love burns in the hearts of the thirsting devotee day and night. He never cares

for his food and drink, he is emaciated and pines away because of separation from the Lord. He does not sleep at night. Not knowing when his Beloved will give darshan, he keeps vigil the whole night. When the devotee has completely killed his egoism, when he has made perfect self-surrender without any reservation or secret desire for his gratification, when he thirsts like the fish out of water for meeting his Beloved, when he feels the separation from the Lord intensely, when the burning agony scorches him to the extreme degree, the Lord appears before the devotee. Then only the Lord wipes his tears, feeds him with his own hands and carries him on His shoulders.

There is no loss in total unreserved self-surrender. It is not at all a bad bargain, but is a mighty gain indeed. You will have to give your body, mind, soul and possessions unto Him. The Lord gives Himself unto you. The whole wealth of the Lord belongs to you. The Lord Himself becomes your own. You have purchased Him by showing your love to Him. He is your slave now. You will become one with the Lord, just as the sugar when dissolved in water becomes one with water. What he wants is your whole heart, fully charged with pure love. The devotee says: "I am Thine and Thou art mine also." Even if there is the slightest tinge of selfishness, you cannot attain Him.

The lover who has developed supreme love is not a slave of forms, formalities and dogmas. He is not bound by the rules of society. There is no outward show, no ringing of bells. He does not care for the sarcastic remarks of the world. His state is indescribable.

He pours forth his love to his Beloved. The love is spontaneous, it is gushing in a continuous stream with no break. Sometimes, when he feels the acute pang of separation from his Beloved, he feels as if he is roasted in a hot pan over the furnace. Immediately the divine nectar flows. Then he feels as if he has taken a plunge in the cool waters of the Ganges.

The lover cannot bear the separation of his Beloved even for a second. Even a moment of separation is a pang of death for him. A second appears to him as one year. When there is separation he thirsts and pants for His presence. His eyes become vacant and his face becomes blank when there is burning in his heart. He gives up his food, drink and sleep. He is restless. He sheds profuse tears of love, finding solace in the tears, and his thirst is quenched a little. He nourishes the delicate and exquisite creeper of love through his tears. He has

no thought save of his Beloved. The fountain of love within his heart is ever-full, it never dries up. Love gushes out from the fountain within in a continuous stream. It is a perennial current of supreme love. Nothing can obstruct its flow.

The path of love is doubtless beset with difficulties, but the devotee who is adamant in his resolve and fiery in his sadhana and dispassion, who has dedicated himself and his all to the Lord, who remembers Him always, crosses over all difficulties quite easily. He gets the divine grace at every step, at every stage. He always lives in God.

The bhakta says, "I am Thine," the vedantin says, "I am He." The devotee who utters "I am Thine" eventually realises the significance of the formula "I am He". The fruit of love is jnana. Love begins with two and ends in one.

O beloved friend! Will you not develop a heart that bursts forth into tears of joy at the name of the Lord? Allow the waves of love to arise constantly in your heart. Feel the warmth of the divine embrace. Bask in the deep sunshine of divine love. Taste the bliss of eternal love. Drink deep the nectar of divine love and be ever happy.

Viraha - The Agony of Separation

Viraha is the pain which the devotee experiences out of separation from the Lord. If you want to have darshan of your Beloved, you will have to shed profuse tears in sincerity. You can hardly win Him by smiles. Read the life of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

He used to roll himself in the dust with tears of agony. That is viraha-agni. That is real devotion. Have you got a soft heart now, my dear readers, to weep for the darshan of your Beloved? Do not cheat yourself. You cannot cheat Him, because He is the witness of all your thoughts. If you heart is still hard, melt it through japa of Sri-Ram, kirtan, study of Bhagavatam, satsang and service. Do not delay even a single moment. Stand up, gird your loins, prepare yourself, do sadhana. Go to a lonely place and weep with sincerity and intense longing. Weeping is one of the ways to develop bhakti. It must be genuine. It must come out of thirst for God.

A bhakta has love for love's sake only, there is no bargaining in him. Just as the wife or son of a sessions-judge has no fear of the judge - although the criminals entertain great fear of him - so also the real bhakta has no fear of God or anyone else. The old fear of retribution has vanished now. He disregards any object other than God. He sees Him in all objects and lives for His sake only. He regards everything as His. He has completely resigned himself to the divine will. He respects and serves all, as he sees his Lord in all. Sometimes he weeps, sometimes he dances in ecstasy. When he feels his separation from the Lord, even for a second, he experiences dejection very keenly. This is termed viraha-agni.

Sometimes the devotee cries out loudly and exclaims: "Where is my dear Lord? Where is my dear Hari? Where is my sweet Bansiwala (holder of the flute) Sri Krishna of Brindavan? Or,

"Where is my Dhanush-dhari (bow-holder), Sri Rama of Ayodhya?

I can hardly bear His separation even for a second." He looks with a steady gaze with eyes full of tears. Sometimes his body is bathed in perspiration, sometimes he is not aware when the day dawns and the night sets in, sometimes he repeats loudly: "Hari, Hari! Hare Rama! Hare Krishna!" Sometimes his body trembles, sometimes he falls down and rolls on the ground, sometimes he laughs and sings aloud: **"Govind Ram Ram Gopala Hari Hari."** Sometimes he jumps and dances round with raised hands and shows various sorts of gestures with the hands, in accordance with the inner feeling, and sometimes he weeps bitterly. Sometimes he falls down and passes into a swoon. The breath stops for some time and slowly comes back again. Sometimes in the agony of desolation he calls his Lord's name, using with contempt such epithets as: "Ciruel, heartless, wearer of skulls on neck, drinker of intoxicants, dweller in the crematorium, art Thou living or dead?" etc. If you visit Navadvip and Brindavan and stay there for some days, you will come across good bhaktas who manifest the above signs.

It is extremely difficult for laymen to understand the hearts and feelings of exalted devotees who are in communion with God. Their states are indescribable. Only a real bhakta can understand another bhakta. Sometimes he falls down and passes into a swoon. The breath stops for some time and slowly comes back again.

The devotee possesses a heart as soft as butter through the practice of japa, kirtan, service of devotees, etc. The fire of the pain of separation from the Lord melts his heart and this gives expression to the shedding of abundant tears in torrents which even drench his clothes. When the sincere tears flow down the cheeks, the Lord appears before the devotee. It is these tears of love that give rise to the descent of an avatara. It is their tears of devotion that force the nirguna Brahman to assume a saguna form for the pious worship and meditation of bhaktas.

The gopis (milk-maids) of Brindavan were actually burnt by the fire of separation. How devoted they were to Lord Krishna! They could not bear the separation even for a second. Sometimes Lord Krishna tested their sincerity by hiding Himself suddenly. They would roam about here and there in the lanes and bowers of Brindavan. They used to address the kadamba trees: "O kadamba trees! Have you seen our Lord? We are burnt by the fire of separation from Him. What message have you brought from Him?

Where is He now? How cruel He is. We are pining for His darshan." They used to shed tears profusely during the period of separation. They had no body-consciousness. When they started lighting their lamps at night, some even burnt their fingers badly but were not aware of this. Their minds were on their Beloved only.

When they heard the sweet, soul-stirring melodious music of the flute of Lord Krishna, they rushed immediately with dishevelled hair and fallen garments to meet Him. They were immersed in the love of Krishna.

The feelings of a devotee who suffers from viraha can hardly be described in words. You will have to experience it yourself. Though a very painful experience indeed for the devotee, it intensifies his love towards the Lord. Become a gopi. Become a Gouranga. Become a Mira. Then only you can feel and know what is viraha. Without viraha you cannot meet the Lord, you cannot have His darshan.

Mira has expressed her feelings in the following poems. They pierce the heart of every reader.

I have watered the creeper of love with my tears.
Now the creeper has grown, the fruit shall be bliss.

The Lord of my heart is delaying.
The clouds of grief are enveloping me.
The scattered clouds have come,
But they have not brought any news from my Beloved.
I have planted the vine of love and irrigated it again and again with the waters of tears.
The whole world sleeps, I alone sit awake to meet my Beloved.
There is one like me who sits in her palace and strings a necklace of pearl,
There is another who strings a garland of tears.
When shall I meet my Beloved Giridhar Nagar, When shall the bower of joy come?
My pain in the heart will vanish only by meeting my Lord.
My Lord! I am restless,
My eyes long for Thy vision,
I feel one night as half-a-year.
O Lord! to whom shall I tell the pang of separation?
My bosom heaves at every sound,
O Lord, when will Thou meet me?
I cannot bear the pain any longer.
Why art Thou so unkind, O Lord?
I am sleepless all the night,
I am waiting the whole night to meet my Beloved.
My body is emaciated O Lord, Thy name is on my lips.
As the chatak looks out for the clouds,
As the fish pines for the water,
Mira is pining to meet her Beloved.
The pain of separation burns my heart,
How can I live without my Beloved?
My heart is restless without thy vision.
When shall I see Thy sweet face, O my Beloved, When shall I hear Thy sweet voice?
I am quite restless, O Lord.
Meet Thou soon, I cannot wait any longer,
The secret arrow of love has pierced my heart,

It has come through the other side.
My heart is burning in separation from my Lord,
My hunger is lost, my sleep is gone.
Dwell in my eyes of Giridhar Nagar,
Enthrone in my heart! Let me hear Thy flute,
Let me behold Thee in every being;
I am dancing and singing to have a sight of Thee.
I cannot suppress my tears however much I try, They flow like streams and drench my clothes.
I am waiting the whole night to meet Thee,
Every sound stirs me up.
The bosom heaves, the eyes ache, the heart burns.
I find solace in my tears, quenching my thirst,
Joy in Thy remembrance, pleasure in Thy name, Bliss in my dancing, happiness in singing Thy praise.
Mira's Lord is Giridhar, she cannot live without Him."

STAGES IN BHAKTI

Satsang, study of scriptures, admiration, faith, devotion, devoutness, taste, intense attachment, steadiness and maha bhava (prem maya), are stages in bhakti.
Through satsang and study of devotional books comes admiration for the Lord; from admiration comes faith; from faith comes devotion to the Lord. Then the devotee practises sadhana bhakti: viz. japa, remembrance and chanting. He burns the sins and obstacles to devotion by the above practice. From sadhana bhakti he develops devoutness; from devoutness comes taste for hearing and chanting the names and glories of the Lord. Then comes intense attachment which brings steadiness or permanent form of bhakti rasa. When this is intensified it is called maha bhava or prema maya.

Now the devotee drinks the essence of God-love and lives in the Lord. Such a devotee is dead to the world and its attractions. He remains like one unconcerned with the activities of his body even.
He reaches the state of jivanmukti (liberation while living).

Ragatmika Bhakti: Bhakti full of raga (passionate longing) is called ragatmika. Whoever cultivates ragatmika bhakti develops priti or sprout of divine love to Lord Krishna's feet. He who cultivates it is called raga-anuga. Ragatmika bhakti is chiefly found in the people of Brindavan.
A passionate longing or extreme thirst for the object of desire or adored object is the characteristic of ragatmika bhakti. Absorption in the object is its feature. A bhakta does not heed scriptural reasoning.
The ragatmika bhakti is cultivated in two ways — external and internal. Externally the devotee chants and hears the Lord's name and praises. Internally in his mind he imagines himself to be identical with his ideal such as any cowherd mate of Sri Krishna, and thus serves Lord Krishna at Brindavan day and night in fancy. He imagines himself as having a perfect form like his ideal. He withdraws himself into his own mind and remains very near to his object of adoration, beloved Krishna,
and thus serves Him
constantly. He takes Lord Krishna as master, friend, child or sweetheart (beloved). The devotee conquers the Lord through rati and bhava and gets the treasure of having love for Sri Krishna.
Rati (attachment for Lord Krishna begotten of sadhana bhakti) in its advanced stage softens the mind more markedly than in its initial stage. When it is deepened in intensity, when the devotee is intensely attached to Lord Krishna, it is called prema (divine love).
This is the bliss potency of the Lord Himself. It lies in a subtle unmanifested state within the individual soul. One attains the wealth of Krishna prema rasa from rati and bhava.
Prema takes the form of sneha, mana, pranaya, raga, anuraga bhava and maha bhava, just as from sugarcane juice we have molasses, black sugar, white sugar, sugar-candy, etc. When love (prema) in its more concentrated form produces melting of the heart, it is called sneha. When sneha in its next higher

stage of development assumes, in order to augment the sweetness of the enjoyment, an attitude of untowardness - not anger, though it may be mistaken for it — it is then called mana. Pranaya is love which makes the lover think himself at one with the beloved. When the devotee feels happiness even when he is put to suffering for the sake of the beloved one, it is called raga. When he discovers ever-new sweetness in the beloved, it is anuraga. The highest state is maha-bhava*.

Bhava and Rasa: Bhava is the name of that emotional state the essence of which is pure sattva. It is compared to the rays of the rising sun. Bhava ushers in prema just as the rays usher in the rising sun, and melts the heart by strong desire for attaining Lord Krishna.

The essential purity of the soul and the softening of the mind are the essential and temporal signs of bhava, respectively.

The nature and essence of bhava are pure consciousness. The mind of the devotee is reduced to a state of pure consciousness owing to the constant practise of devotion and the grace of the Lord.

Rasa is a divine emotional state. It is an eternal, indivisible and inconcievable essence of the supreme transcendental bliss. It is a state of ecstasy which a devotee experiences in the height of his devotion for God. This state is not a negative emptiness, but a positive state of bliss and rejoicing. The relish of permanent joy characterises this state of divine rapture.

Bharata, the author of the Natyasastra, classifies rasa into eight groups: erotic, heroic, pathetic, marvellous, ludicrous, terrible, disgusting and furious are the eight kinds of rasas. To this the ninth rasa, santa (peaceful) is added by other rhetoricians.

Rasa of the philosophy of love is liquid mellowness. It is the essence of feeling. "God Himself is rasa," and "by attaining this essence one becomes blissful," — thus declare the Upanishads. This is the keynote of the bhakta's conception of the Absolute. Lord Krishna is an embodiment of rasa. He is the repository of all bliss.

He is the fountain source of rasa.

Rasa is a high state of emotion in the heart. Divine rasa breaks the shell of ignorance which envelops the devotee and causes the Atman to reveal Itself.

The Bhagavatam treats of the rasas in the most perfect manner. In fact, the whole book is an embodiment of these rasas. It shows how one can attain perfection through the cultivation of rasas of bhakti.
Bhava is the main basis of rasa. It is a mental state - a feeling.bDivine rasa is a bhava which is pure and unalloyed, devoid of rajas and tamas. It calms and softens the mind and fills it with pure sattva. This pure state of sattva receives the essence of the soul of God. It reflects the eternal nature of the Reality. There is thus Self-realisation or God-consciousness.
This bhava, when deep-rooted in the mind, is called stayi bhava (permanent mood). This is the basis of rasa in as much as the relish which is the essence of rasa lies here in an implicit state. It is nothing but the bliss potency of God that is called rasa.
Sthayi Bhava Vibhava : The permanent emotion (sthayi bhava) on being mingled with rasa is changed into these four: vibhava, anubhava, sattvic and vyabhichari (just as curd on being mixed with sugar, black pepper and camphor becomes a wonderfully delicious thing named rasala).

Vibhava : This is the cause or extension of rasa. It is that for which rati etc., are felt, or in which rati etc., repose, as well as that which awakens rati, etc. Vibhava is of two kinds, viz: alambana and uddipana.
Alambana is that in respect of which rati (attachment for Lord Krishna) is considered. It is of two kinds: (i) Vishaya alambana i.e.
Lord Krishna himself for whom rati etc., are felt and (ii) asraya alambana i.e., Krishna bhaktas in whom rati, etc., dwell. These two by their presence inspire attachment for Lord Krishna.
Uddipana is that which awakens rati for Sri Krishna owing to its association with Sri Krishna. Lord Krishna's qualities, deeds, His foot marks, tulasi etc., are called uddipana or excitants.

Anubhava: Anubhava is the effect of rasa. It is stimulated by smile, dance and song. Anubhava is that feeling which exhibits the internal emotions of its subject by outward symptoms such as dancing, singing, laughter, etc.

Sattva: That state of mind which is produced by realizing the presence of Krishna, or by associations immediately connected with His presence, is called sattva. Emotions that arise from this sattva are sattvic. The eight sattvic bhavas are paralysis, perspiration, horripilation, hoarseness of voice, trembling, change of colour, tears, and loss of consciousness.
In separation there are two emotional states caused by extreme sentiment of love. They are stupor caused by lack of control over oneself owing to separation, and rapture wherein all the eight sattvic bhavas are evidenced.

Vyabhichari: Emotions exhibited by words, gestures and sattva are vyabhichari, which is of thirty three kinds. (They are also called sanchari bhavas). They are self-disparagement, despondency, abject humility, sorrow, exhaustion, arrogance, pride, doubt, fear, impulse, raving, forgetfulness, illness, loss of sensibility or consciousness, death, idleness, stupor, shyness, cloaking one's own real feelings,
remembrance, wrong argument, brooding,
determination, calmness, delight, solicitude, ferocity, impatience, jealousy, fickleness, sleep, sleepiness and waking or knowing.

Five Kinds of Bhava
In bhakti-yoga, generally, there are five kinds of rasas: santa, priti, sakhya, vatsalya and madhurya. From these rasas develop the sadhanas of santa-bhava, dasya-bhava, sakhya-bhava, vatsalya-bhava and madhurya-bhava. Thus devotion is a method of Self-realisation and not a mere play of emotions.

Santa-bhava: In santa-rasa the mind of the devotee is full of knowledge and is emotionless. It is practised only by paramahamsa sannyasins and jnanins of the highest type. Their emotions are stilled and they have direct consciousness of God where all emotions are fused into divinity. Only jnanis possess santa-rasa. Santa-rasa is an attribute of Brahman or the Absolute. Brahman is santa; and a jnani who knows Brahman is also santa. Bhishma had his emotions under control and is an example of a santa rasa bhakta. He had no bubbling emotions. He was a stern devotee of God but was not a slave of his emotions. He was a ruler of his emotions and so was a jnani.

A bhakta of santa-bhava is indifferent to worldly things and is entirely dispassionate. Santa corresponds to sama or calmness of mind. The bhaktas practising santa-bhava are called tapasvins.
They arouse the bhava of santa through study of Upanishads and such scriptures, through living the life of seclusion, through intuitional flashes of divinity and association with men of similar nature.
The santa-bhakta is always tranquil and undisturbed and is not upset by external events. He is strong in his opinions and is not changed by other's remarks. He rests peacefully in God and appears like an ocean without waves. These are some of the characteristics of a bhakta of santa-bhava.

Dasya-bhava: In dasya-bhava the devotee feels that he is a servant of God. Dasya-bhava is the outcome of priti rasa or prema bhakti. It is a common factor which runs through the stages of sakhya, vatsalya and madhurya rasas. The devotee always considers himself as the receiver of grace from the Lord. The devotee here loves God either with a love tinged with respect, or love with a sense of greatness.
The dasya-bhakta always considers himself as inferior to God. He considers it his duty to worship and love God, for God is his master. He serves God and serves the whole world as the manifestation of God. He is the servant of all, he is the slave of all beings. He considers all as his masters, for everything else except himself is God. The devotee feels that he is not God but all else is God. He craves to be protected by God at all times, for he has personally no power. He is a slave of God. The master should take care of the servant. The dasya-bhakta always prays to his master, God, to save him. He is engrossed in the contemplation of God. He is finally lost in God through incessant contemplation.

Sakhya-bhava: In sakhya-bhava the devotee feels that God is a friend. He is the most supreme comrade. He is the lover, protector and the guide. He considers His devotee as a friend. "I am My devotee's heart, and the devotee is My heart," says the Lord. The devotee considers God as his equal in relation, complexion, status, dress, qualification, etc. Still this is unaffected by the feeling of diffidence which the devotee possesses. The devotee always feels

very much his separation from the Lord. A friend cannot live without the company of the other friend - friends eat together, talk together, live together — the devotee cannot live without God.

Vatsalya-bhava: This devotee feels that God is his son. Evidently God appears before him in the same personal relationship. What the devotee thinks, that God gives to him. The relationship between this devotee and God is that of a parent and child. The love towards a child is transferred to God in the same fashion. The Lordship of God is sublimated to a state of the affection of childhood. God is not a master but a child. Generally this kind of feeling on the part of the devotee throws into the background the conception of the absolute nature of God. The devotee develops a human relationship which if not directed in a proper way, may not allow him to realise absolute identity. The devotee is liable to forget the great glory of God in his development of vatsalya-rasa or son-parent relationship. Certain devotees are so much attached to the conception of God as a son that even if God appears before them in His supreme form, they are unable to leave the idea that He is only a child. Only through the touch of divine grace can they be turned to the consciousness of the absolute nature of God. God is all-compassionate and so He shall do it
In females this rasa causes even mammary secretion. The mental feelings have a direct action on the physical body. Whatever one intensely thinks of, that certainly he becomes in no time.

Madhurya-bhava: The highest development of rasa is that of madhurya. This is the attitude of the lover and the beloved. God is essentially pure bliss. Madhurya-rasa is the manifestation of pure bliss. The essential nature of existence is joy. The zenith of love is reached between the lover and the beloved. Other loves are only partial, but the love connecting the lover and the beloved is the strongest of all loves. It is hard to break this love, hard to understand this love, hard to develop this love.
God is the embodiment of love. He is cupid unto cupid himself.
God is most beautiful and lovely. To love Him is to express the fullness of affection. Love for God is not partial, it is the completeness of emotion.

Madhurya-rasa is the super-sensuous prototype of singar-rasa.
In the common world it is found that the sensuous pleasure attains its highest stage of intensity in what is called conjugal love. On this analogy, the singara or the madhurya-rasa is the highest state of development on the spiritual side. It is not carnal love but pure love devoid of clinging to earthliness. It is very difficult to develop this kind of feeling. It is oftentimes more dangerous than effective in the case of beginner-seekers.
Madhurya-rasa is the highest because in it all conventionalities and hesitations, reservations and personal views are cast off and love and love alone without blemish is developed. The highest intensity of joy or bliss is attained in the development of madhurya-bhava. This is not an erotic or libidinous craving. It is pure love which cannot be understood by lustful persons. The majority of persons cannot understand this, for the majority are devoid of pure heart.
In madhurya-rasa there is a craving for an embrace. Mutual embrace is the effect of the intensity of the expression of love. This is so both materially and spiritually. Materially it is a bondage born of attachment, but spiritually it is a means for liberation from infatuated love. The workings of the love appetite are inscrutable.
They can be experienced but cannot be understood through the Intellect. Even so in the case of the bliss of the absolute Brahman. It is a state unable to be grasped and far away from reason and argumentation.
Philosophers cannot understand it and meta-
physicians cannot comprehend it. It is a state of the heart. What can the intellect do with it? No amount of ratiocination can give out the experience of a particular state. Intellect should stop if experience is to bloom forth. Love melts into experience. The devotee is lost in the love of his beloved.
The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says: 'Even as a husband when in fast embrace with his wife does not know either of the inside or of outside, so also when the individual is in fast embrace with the Supreme, he knows nothing else, either internal or external." There is only bliss and nothing else. Bliss is without objectification. The couple do not know from where the bliss comes, they are simply merged in the ocean of bliss. There is no consciousness of the subject and the object. The consciousness that I am the lover and that he is the

beloved is lost in a state of pure and unalloyed bliss which is incapable of being explained. There is bliss in deep sleep but it does not come from any object. There is bliss in conjugal love but it does not come either from the husband or the wife. There is bliss in the realisation of the Absolute which is neither from the subject nor the object. Bliss is the eternal nature of existence. The deepest appetite is between the sexes; and the devotee develops this bhava in order to lose his individual consciousness in that of the object of love. Madhurya-bhava is of two kinds viz., sambhoga and vipralambha. Sambhoga is a kind of intense bhava which exceeds the ecstasy of the eager union of the lovers wherein both are intensely selfless and desire each other's happiness. Its characteristics are manifold. Vipralambha is that which stands between their mutual union or separation, whereby it intensifies the sweetness of their future union. It is of four kinds:

1. Purva raga — that which is generated at the first glance or on hearing about each other's goodness, merits and beauty, which also blends with vibhavas, etc.
2. Mana — the bhava that hinders the union of the lovers who are unflinchingly entwined with each other at their heart of hearts, and which is unable to withstand the intense ecstasy of their union.
3. Pravasa — the condition of the lovers who were previously united but now separated by long barrier.
4. Premavaichitrya — the state of violent passion wherein the maiden lover pants from a vague sense of separation though actually being in a state of ecstatic union with her lover.

Rudha and adhirudha bhavas: Madhurya-rasa has two special features: rudha (newly germinated) and adhirudha (all-full, mature). Queen Rukmini and others had rudha-bhavas and the gopis had the adhirudha-bhavas which are of two kinds, madana and mohana: madana in the presence of Krishna and mohana in His absence. Rudha is a kind of intense feeling which at the beginning of divine love generates and intensifies sattvic-bhava, whereas
adhirudha is a state of deep emotion of a mature stage of divine love.

Among the two aspects of adhirudha-bhava, madana (amatory intoxication) is the fullest development of all the bhavas, of which Radha alone is the embodiment. Madana has mainly two expressions: udghurna and chittrajalpa. Udghurna is a state of various emotional contortions caused by the extreme sorrow of separation from the Lord. Chittrajalpa is outburst of the suppressed pathos of separation, and also of intense solicitude for the absent lover, which gives way at the sight of the lover.

Ten Kinds of Chittrajalpa: The ten kinds of chittrajalpa are:

1. Prajalpa - is a kind of haughty, upbraid expression of the lover (though out of wantonness) emanating from the depth of her intense love for the Beloved.
2. Parijalpa — is also a kind of the same expression, when she, out of intense affection, boasts of her own superiority and patience, arguing about her lover's careless indifference, roughness and insincerity.
3. Sujalpa — is the expression of lover's eagerness, panting and impatience, when she strives to know about her Beloved's affairs.
4. Vijalpa — a taunting expression about her lover which clearly indicates her latent disturbed emotion.
5. Ujjalpa - the maiden's disdainful and regretful expressions about Krishna's jugglery and tricks.
6. Samjalpa — is a sort of regretful expression of the lover who ridicules her Beloved because of His indifferences and uncaring attitude towards her.
7. Pratijalpa — here the maiden expresses to the messenger of Krishna her reluctance to go to Him, for He keeps company of other women.
8. Avajalpa — is a kind of expression of the maiden who out of her secret apprehension and jealousy, tells about her folly in having entwined herself in love with One who in turn deceives and neglects her.
9. Abhijalpa — the maiden expresses how regretful it is of Sri Krishna, who is so cruel that He even gives pain to little innocent creatures like birds, and so all should abstain from His company.
10. Ajalpa — the maiden regretfully accuses Sri Krishna of deceit and crookedness, who can but give trouble and affliction while Himself receiving happiness from others.

A Caution: Madhurya-rasa is absolutely different from conjugality of earthly experience. One should not be mistaken for the other.

Earthly conjugality is purely selfish and is undertaken only because it gives pleasure to one's own self. But in love for God it is because it gives pleasure to God and not for the sake of the devotee. Divine love is not selfish. It is born of sattva. But earthly lust is born of rajas and attachment to bodies. Earthly conjugality is the outcome of egoistic self-regarding feeling, while divine communion is the outcome of other-regarding feeling devoid of egoism. Strong selfishness is the root of worldly passion; divine love is the product of loss of egoism.

This is the greatest difference between lust (kama) and divine love (prema). The two are related as darkness is related to light. No development of earthly affection, however perfect it may be, can lead one to the supreme joy of divine communion. Lust lurks in the heart due to the passion that burns in the core of things. Divine love is unknown to the man of the world, however religious he may be. The secret of divine love cannot be understood, and should not be tried to be understood, so long as man is only a man and woman only a woman. The austere transformation of the human into the divine is the beginning of true love for God.

In the state of maha-bhava the devotee flies into a super-sensuous state of bliss of the divine. The feeling of delight remains quite aloof from the contact of sensualism and gets absorbed in the being of the Eternal. The intermediate states of sneha, mana, pranaya, raga and anuraga lead to the climax of maha-bhava, where individual consciousness is lost in God-consciousness. Intense feeling of viraha (burning agony due to separation from the Lord) is the step before maha-bhava. The gopis of Brindavan and Gouranga and Jayadeva are examples of madhurya-rasa bhaktas, or devotees of the highest type.

The devotee may follow any of these bhavas or rasas and attain the divine. Ultimately he will reach the madhurya-bhava and maha-bhava, where ends the aspiration and craving of the individual.

LORD SIVA AND HIS WORSHIP

In Me the Universe has its origin,
In Me alone the whole subsists;
In Me it is lost — this Siva
The timeless, It is I Myself.
Sivoham! Sivoham! Sivoham!

Glory of Lord Siva

OM. I bow with folded hands to Lord Siva who is the Lord of the universe, who is the destroyer of egoism, lust and anger, who is the Lord of Uma (also called Gauri and Ganga), who is full of light, knowledge and bliss, who is the Lord of yogis, who is the storehouse of knowledge and who is known by the various names of Mahadeva, Sankara, Hara, Sambhu, Sadasiva, Rudra, Sulapani, Bhairava, Uma-Maheshwara, Nilakantha, Trilochana or Tryambaka (the three-eyed), Visvanatha, Chandrasekhara, Ardhanarishwara, Parama Siva, Digambara, Dakshinamurti, etc.

When Brahma and Lord Vishnu went to find out the head and feet of Lord Siva, He assumed an infinite expansive blaze of light. They were baffled in their attempts.

How merciful He is! How loving and kind He is! He is an embodiment of renunciation, mercy, love and wisdom. It is a mistake to say that He is the destroyer. Lord Siva in reality is the regenerator. Whenever one's physical body becomes unfit for further evolution in this birth — either by disease, old age or other causes — He at once removes this rotten physical sheath and gives a new, healthy, vigorous body for further quick evolution. He wants to take all His children to His lotus feet quickly. He desires to give them His own status. It is easier to please Siva than Hari. A little divine love and devotion, a little chanting of His mantra is quite sufficient to infuse delight in Siva. He gives boons to His devotees quite readily. How large is His heart! He gave His own bow to Arjuna without any difficulty, for his little penance. He gave a precious boon to Bhasmasura. In Kalahasti near Tirupati He gave darshan to

Kannappanayanar, the devoted hunter who plucked his two eyes to replace the weeping eyes in the murthi. In Chidambaram even the untouchable pariah saint, Nandan, had darshan of Lord Siva.

Lord Siva ran with tremendous speed to make the boy Markandeya immortal when he was in the clutches of Yama, the god of death. He initiated the four virgin youths — Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanathana and Sanatkumara - into the mysteries of jnana in the form of Guru Dakshinamurthy. In Madura in southern India, He assumed the form of a boy and carried earth on his head for a devoted lady when a dam was erected in the Vaigai river. Look at the unbounded mercy for His devotees.

How magnanimous and self-effulgent He is. He lived in the house of Pattinattu Swami in southern India for several years as his adopted son and disappeared after leaving a note saying: "Even the broken needles will not follow you after your death"

The reading of
this note was the starting point for attainment of jnana for Pattinattu Swami.

Hatha yogis awaken the kundalini shakti that is lying dormant in the muladhara chakra by asana, pranayama, kumbhaka, mudra and bandha; take it above through the different chakras (centres of spiritual energy) — svadhishthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddha and ajna, and join it with Lord Siva at the sahasrara, the thousand petalled lotus at the crown of the head. They drink the nectar of immortality. When the shakti is united with Siva, full illumination comes for the yogi.

Lord Siva represents the destructive aspect of Brahman. That portion of Brahman that is enveloped by the aspect of maya where tamas is predominant, is Lord Siva, who is the all-pervading Ishvara and who also dwells in Mount Kailas. He is the store-house of wisdom. Siva minus maya (Parvati or Kali or Durga) is pure nirguna Brahman. With maya He becomes the saguna Brahman for the purpose of pious devotion of His devotees. Rama Himself worshipped Lord Siva at the famous Rameshwaram. Devotees of Rama must worship Lord Siva also. Lord Siva is the Lord of ascetics and Lord of yogis.

Pictures of Lord Siva have great symbolic meaning. The trisul (trident) that is held in His right hand represents the three gunas - sattva, rajas and tamas.

That is the emblem of sovereignty. He wields the world through these three gunas. The damaru (small drum) in His left hand represents the shabda Brahman (sound). It represents OM from which all languages are formed. It is He who formed the sanskrit language out of the damaru sound.
The wearing of the crescent moon on His head indicates that He has controlled the mind perfectly. The flow of the Ganges represents the nectar of immortality. The elephant symbolically represents pride. Wearing the skin of the elephant denotes that He has controlled pride. The tiger represents lust. His sitting on the tiger's skin indicates that he has conquered lust. His holding a deer in one hand indicates that He has removed the tossing of the mind. (Deer jumps from one place to another swiftly. The mind also jumps from one object to another). His wearing of serpents on the neck denotes wisdom and eternity. Serpents live for a number of years.
He is the three-eyed One, in the centre of whose forehead is the third eye, the eye of wisdom. Nandi, the bull that sits in front of the Siva-lingam represents pranava (OM). The lingam represents advaita (non-duality). It points out, "I am one without a second."

The Siva Lingam

The popular belief is that the Siva lingam represents the phallus or the virile organ, the emblem of the generative power or principle in nature. This is not only a serious mistake but a grave blunder. In the post-vedic period, the lingam become symbolical of the generative power of Lord Siva. Lingam is the differentiating mark.
It is certainly not the sex mark. You will find in the Lingam Purana:
"The foremost lingam which is primary and is devoid of smell, colour, taste, hearing, touch, etc. is spoken of as prakriti (nature)."
Linga means mark in Sanskrit. It is a symbol which points to an inference. When you see a big flood in a river, you infer that there had been heavy rains the previous day. When you see smoke, you infer that there is fire. This vast world of countless forms is a lingam of the omnipresent Lord. The Siva lingam is a symbol of Lord Siva.

When you look at the lingam, your mind is at once elevated and you begin to think of the Lord. Lord Siva is really formless. He has no form of His own and yet all forms are His forms. All forms are pervaded by Lord Siva.

There is a mysterious power or indescribable shakti in the lingam to induce concentration of the mind. Just as the mind is focussed easily in crystal gazing, so also the mind attains one-pointedness when it looks at the lingam. That is the reason why the ancient rishis of India and the seers have prescribed lingam for being installed in the temples of Lord Siva. The Siva lingam speaks to you in the unmistakable language of silence: "I am one without a second. I am formless.'

Pure, pious souls only can understand this language. A curious, passionate, impure foreigner of little understanding or intelligence says sarcastically, "Oh! The Hindus worship the phallus or sex organ. They are ignorant people. They have no philosophy." When a foreigner tries to learn Tamil or Hindustani language, he first tries to pick up some vulgar words. This is his curious nature. Even so, the curious foreigner tries to find out some defects in the worship of symbols. Lingam is only the outward symbol of the formless being, Lord Siva, Who is the indivisible, all-pervading, eternal, auspicious, ever-pure, immortal essence of this vast universe, Who is the undying soul seated in the chambers of your heart, Who is your indweller, innermost Self or Atman, and Who is identical with the supreme Brahman.

Sphatikalingam (crystal lingam) is also a symbol of Lord Siva. • This is prescribed for worship of Lord Siva. It is made of quartz. It has no colour of its own but takes on the colour of the substances which come in contact with it. It represents the nirguna Brahman or the attributeless supreme Self or formless and attributeless Siva.

For a sincere devotee, the lingam is not a block of stone. It is all radiant light and consciousness. It talks to him, makes him shed profuse tears, produces horripilation and melting of the heart, raises him above body consciousness and helps him to commune with the Lord and attain nirvikalpa samadhi. Lord Rama worshipped the Siva lingam at Rameshwar. Ravana, the learned scholar, worshipped the golden lingam. What a lot of mystic shakti there must be in the lingam!

Kailas hills in Tibet are a huge range with a central, beautiful, naturally carved and decorated shining peak, eternally clad with silvery snow. They are 22,980 feet above sea level. (Some take the height to be 22,028 feet.) One particular peak, Mt. Kailas, is in the form of a natural, huge Siva lingam (it symbolises the gross universal form of God). This is worshipped from a distance as the form of Lord Siva. There is neither a temple nor a pujari nor a daily puja there. (I had the fortune to have darshan of Kailas through the grace of Lord Siva on July 22nd 1931. I even climbed with panting breath to the foot of Kailas peak where the Indus takes its origin. It is very picturesque soul-stirring scenery. You will have to ascend from Didipha Guha, the first halting stage in the perambulation around Kailas. The Indus gushes out as a small streamlet through blocks of ice from behind the back portion of Kailas peak. Though in the pictures of Lord Siva it is shown that the Ganges flows from his head, it is really the Indus that takes its origin from the head of Siva (Kailas) in the physical plane. Perambulation around Kailas covers 30 miles. It takes three days. On the way comes the famous and sacred Gauri Kund which is eternally covered with snow. You will have to break the snow when you take a bath there.)

The twelve jyotir-lingams of Lord Siva are in the following places:

1. Somnath in Gujarat.
2. Mallikarjun in Sri Saila Parvat near Tirupati.
3. Mahakali in Ujjain in Gwalior district.
4. Omkareshwar on the banks of the Narmada in Amaleshwaram.
5. Bhaijnath near Gaya.
6. Naganath in southern India.
7. Kedarnath in Himalayas in the district of Garhwal.
8. Tryambak, near the source of the Godavari in the Nasik district.
9. Rameshwaram, in Ramnad district.
10. Bhima Sankar, near Poona.
11. Visvanath in Benares.
12. Grishneshwar (Gokarna) in Karwar District.

Even if people remember the Lord in these twelve places both morning and evening, the sins of seven births will be destroyed.

In southern India there are five famous Siva lingams which represent the five elements.
1. In Shyali, Tanjore district, there is prithvi (earth element) lingam.
2. In Tiruvana Koil, Trichinopoly district, there is ap (water element) lingam. The lingam is always in water.
(Tiruvana Koil is otherwise known as Jambukeshwaram.)
3. In Kalahasti, North Arcot district, there is vayu (air element) lingam.
4. In Tiruvannamalai, via Villupuram Junction, North Arcot district, there is the tejo (fire element) lingam.
(Arunachaleshwar.)
5. In Chidambaram, there is the akasa (space element) lingam.

WORSHIP OF SHAKTI

The Divine Mother, Devi, Maheshvari or Para shakti is the supreme shakti or power of the Supreme Being. Shakti is the energy aspect of the Lord. It is inherent in God. Just as you cannot separate heat from fire, so also you cannot separate shakti from God, the Shakta, or the possessor of shakti. Shakti and Shakta are one. They are inseparable.
Devi, Durga, Kali, Bhagavati, Bhavani, Ambal, Ambika, Jagadambe, Kamesvari, Ganga, Uma, Chandi, Chamindi, Lalita, Gauri, Kundalini, Tara, Rajesvari, Tripurasundari, etc., are all forms of Shakti. Radha, Durga, Lakshmi, Sarasvati and Savitri are also five names of the same Shakti. She is worshipped during the nine days of Navaratri as Durga, Lakshmi and Sarasvati.

Manifestations of Shakti

Shakti is symbolically female; but It is, in reality, neither male or female. It is only a Force which manifests Itself in various forms.
Electricity, magnetism, heat, light, the five elements and their combinations, are all external manifestations of Shakti. Intelligence, discrimination, psychic power and will are all Her internal manifestations. She keeps up the lila (play)

of the Lord through the gunas — sattva, rajas and tamas. She lies dormant in the muladhara chakra at the base of the spine, in the form of serpent power or coiled-up energy known as the kundalini shakti. She is at the centre of the life of the universe, she is the primal force of life that underlies all existence. She vitalises the body through the sushumna nadi and nerves and nourishes the body with chyle and blood. She vitalises the universe through Her energy. She is the energy in the sun, the fragrance in the flowers, the beauty in the landscape, the Gayatri or the blessed Mother in the Vedas, colour in the rainbow, intelligence in the mind, potency in homeopathic pills, power in sages, devotion in bhaktas, samyama and samadhi in yogis.
Knowledge, peace, lust, anger, greed, egoism and pride are all Her forms. Her manifestations are countless. Devi or Shakti is nature Itself. The whole world is Her body, mountains are Her bones, rivers are Her veins, ocean is Her bladder, sun and moon are Her eyes, wind is Her breath and fire is Her mouth.

The Divine Mother

Devi is the Mother of all. The pious and the wicked, the rich and the poor, the saint and the sinner are all Her children. In this world, all the wants of the child are provided by the mother. The child's growth, development and sustenance are looked after by the mother. Even so, all the necessities of life and its activities in this world, and the energy needed for it, depend upon Shakti or the Universal Mother. The human mother is a manifestation of the Universal Mother. All women are forms of the Divine Mother.
You are more free with your mother than with anybody else.
You open your heart more freely to your mother than to your father.
There is no God greater than the mother. It is the mother who protects you, nourishes you, consoles you, cheers you and nurses you. She sacrifices her all for the sake of her children. She is your first guru. The first syllable which almost every quadruped or human being utters, is the beloved name of the mother 'Ma'. A child is more familiar with the mother than with the father, because the former is very kind, loving, tender and affectionate, and looks after the wants of the child. Whenever the child wants anything it runs with outstretched hands to the mother rather than to the father. If she hears the cry

of the child she leaves her domestic work and runs immediately to attend to the child. In the spiritual field also, the aspirant or the devotee (the spiritual child) has more intimate relationship with Mother Durga than with the father, Siva.

It behoves, therefore, that the aspirant should approach the Mother first, so that She may introduce Her spiritual child to the Father for its illumination or Self-realisation. That is the reason why the devotees have placed Radha, Sita, Gauri etc., first in the jugal (combined) names, such as Radha-Krishna, Sita-Rama, Gauri-Shankar, Uma-Shankar, Bhavani-Shankar, Lakshmi-Narayana.

Mother's grace is boundless, Her mercy is illimitable, Her knowledge is infinite, Her power is immeasurable, Her glory is ineffable, Her splendour is indescribable. Approach Her with an open heart. Lay bare your heart before Her with frankness and humility. Be as simple as a child. Kill ruthlessly egoism, cunning-ness, selfishness and crookedness. Make a total, unreserved, ungrudging surrender to Her. Sing Her praises, repeat Her name and worship Her with faith and unflinching devotion.

Worship of the Divine Mother

Worship of Devi or the Universal Mother gives not only prosperity, but liberation from all bondage. It leads to the attainment of knowledge of the Self. The story of the Kena Upanishad, known as the Yaksha-Prasna, supports this view.

Shakti is all. She can do anything. She can make or mar, she can mend or end. For the sake of the continuance of Her divine play here, She Herself, as the veil of ignorance, has veiled the truth from you and bound you to this samsara (worldly existence). When She is propitiated through the practice of sincere devotion and unconditional self-surrender,

She, as knowledge, removes the veil and

enables one to perceive the Truth.

No one can free himself from the thraldom of mind and matter without Mother's grace. The fetters of maya are too hard to break. If the aspirant worships Her as the great Mother, he can very easily go beyond the phenomenal world through Her benign grace and bless-ings. She will remove

all obstacles in the path, lead him safely into the illimitable domain of eternal bliss and make him absolutely free. The aspirant thinks that the world is identical with the Divine Mother. He moves about thinking his own form to be the form of the Divine Mother, and thus beholds oneness everywhere. He also feels that the Divine Mother is identical with Brahman.
Worship of the Divine Mother, intense faith, perfect devotion and self-surrender will help one to attain Her grace. Through Her grace alone can knowledge of the Imperishable be attained.

Durga: Lakshmi: Sarasvati

Divine Mother is everywhere triple. She is endowed with the three gunas, sattva, rajas and tamas; she manifests as will (ichcha shakti), action (kriya shakti) and knowledge (jnana shakti); she is Brahma-shakti (Sarasvati) in conjunction with Brahma, Vishnu-shakti (Lakshmi) in conjunction with Lord Vishnu and Siva-shakti (Mahakali or Durga) in conjunction with Lord Siva. Sarasvati is cosmic intelligence, cosmic consciousness, cosmic knowledge. Lakshmi does not merely mean material wealth like gold, cattle, etc., but all kinds of prosperity, glory, magnificence, joy, exaltation or greatness come under Lakshmi. Durga (Devi) is the transformative power of Divinity, the power that dissolves multiplicity in unity.
Devi (Durga) assumes many aspects according to the tasks to be performed by Her — sometimes sweet and tender, and at other times terrible and devouring. She is always kind and gracious to Her devotees. Arjuna, the Pandava hero, worshipped Her before starting the fight against the evil-minded Kauravas. Sri Rama worshipped Her at the time of the fight with Ravana, to invoke Her aid in the war. He fought and won through Her grace. When Vishnu and Mahadeva destroyed various demons, the power of Devi was behind them. Devi took Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra and gave them the necessary shakti to proceed with the work of creation, preservation and destruction.

Navaratri and its Significance

During Navaratri the whole of India adores the Mother and worships Her with great devotion. (Dussara, Durga Puja and Navaratri are one and the same.) On the first three nights, Durga or the destructive aspect of the Mother is worshipped. On the succeeding three nights it is the creative aspect, or Lakshmi, that is adored. On the last three nights the knowledge aspect, or Sarasvati, is invoked. The tenth day is "Vijaya-dasami day' or the day of victory'.

There is a special significance in this arrangement. When the Devi is worshipped by a devotee in this order, as Durga She first destroys the evil propensities that lurk in his mind. Then, as Lakshmi, She implants therein the divine qualities conducive to spiritual unfoldment. Then, as Sarasvati, She bestows true knowledge on him.

The tenth day commemorates the victory of knowledge over nescience, goodness over evil. It is the day on which boys start their schooling. Aspirants are initiated on this day. On this memorable day the carpenter, the tailor, the mason, the artist, the songster, the typist and all technical workers do puja to their instruments and implements. They behold and recognise the shakti or power behind these instruments, and worship the Devi for their success, prosperity and peace.

Siva and Shakti

The Supreme Lord is represented as Siva, and His power is represented as His wife — Shakti, Durga or Kali. There is no difference between God and His Shakti, just as there is no difference between fire and its burning power. Shakti is inherent in God. Just as you cannot separate heat from fire, so also you cannot separate Shakti from God, the possessor of Shakti. Shakti is Brahman Itself.

Siva and Shakti are one. Siva is always with Shakti. They are inseparable. Worship of Durga, Devi, Parvati, Shakti or Kali is worship of Lord Siva. Mother Durga is the energy aspect of the Lord. Without Durga Siva has no expression; and without Siva Durga has no existence.

Siva is the soul of Durga. Durga is identical with Siva. Lord Siva is only the silent Witness. He is motionless, absolutely changeless. He is not affected by the cosmic play. Durga does everything. Lord Siva is quite indifferent to the external world. He has handed over the power of attorney to His consort, Durga. It is Mother Durga only who looks after the affairs of the world. Siva is absorbed in contemplation of the Self. He remains in a state of nirvikalpa samadhi.

Siva is omnipotent, impersonal, inactive. He is pure consciousness. Shakti is dynamic. The power or active aspect of the immanent God is Shakti. Shakti is the embodiment of power. Lord Siva gazes at Durga, His Shakti; She engages Herself in creation, preservation and destruction.

Siva and Shakti are related as effulgence and the power that is latent in pure consciousness, which gives rise the world of distinctions. In other words, Shakti is the very possibility of the Absolute appearing as many, of God causing this universe. God creates this world through the power of creation, preserves through the power of preservation, and destroys through the power of dissolution.

Siva is an embodiment of bliss and knowledge. Siva Himself appears in the form of man with a life of pleasure and pain. If you remember this point always, dualism and all hatred, jealousy and pride will vanish. You must consider every human function as worship or a religious act. Answering calls of nature, micturition, talking, eating, walking, seeing and hearing all become worship of the Lord if you develop the right attitude. It is Siva who works in and through man. Where then is egoism and individuality? All human actions are divine actions. One universal life throbs in the heart of all, sees in the eyes of all, works in the hands of all and hears in the ears of all. What magnanimous experience it is, if one can feel this by crushing this little 'I'. Unfortunately the old tendencies, the old desires and the old habits of thinking stand in the way of your realising this experience.

Shaktism

Worship of Shakti or Shaktism is one of the oldest and most widespread religions in the world. In reality every man in this world is a follower of

Shaktism. Everybody in this world wants power, loves to possess power, is elated by power. Everybody wants to domineer over others through power. War is the outcome of greed for power. Scientists are followers of Shaktism. He who wishes to develop will power and a charming personality is a follower of Shaktism.

Scientists now say that everything is energy only, and that energy is the physical ultimate of all forms of matter. The followers of the shakta school of philosophy have said the same thing long ago.

They further say that this energy is only limited manifestation of the infinite supreme power or Maha-shakti.

MEDITATION

Background of Thought

The background of thought of a businessman is about his money. His mind is always on the safe. He plans, speculates and schemes about how to increase his money in the bank from one lakh to two lakhs. The background of thought of a young man is about his wife. The background of thought of a doctor is about his patients, dispensary and drugs. The background of thought of a lawyer is about his clients, courts and rulings of the High Court. The background of thought of an old grandmother is about her grandchildren. The vast majority of people indulge in thoughts of jealousy and hatred, and these thoughts form their background.

A vedantin or a student of jnana yoga has an abstract background. He meditates on abstract ideas. The background of thought of a bhakta is about his Ishta-devata (chosen deity). A devotee of Lord Krishna always thinks of Krishna with flute in hand. He has a concrete background. A sattvic background keeps the mind always pure and takes the devotee to the goal. The mental image of Lord Krishna destroys all other worldly thoughts. A sacred background of thought - either concrete or abstract - is a valuable spiritual asset for a man.

A habit to think of the image is formed by constant thinking of one's Ishta-devata. Even in the office when you leave the pen on the table, the mind through force of habit will at once move to the background of thought and think of the picture of Lord Krishna. Even in dream you will have vision of Lord Krishna only. The greater the sadhana, the stronger the background of thought of the mental image. Even when you work in the office, just close your eyes for a couple of minutes every hour and think of the picture of Lord Krishna and repeat his mantra. This is an excellent practice. This is solid sadhana. You will have an unruffled state of mind always. You can turn out more work with greater concentration.

In the beginning you may not be able to bring the full image before your mind's eye. When you think of the face of Lord Krishna, the feet and hands will disappear. When you think of His feet, His face will slip away. Through constant sadhana you can visualise a well-defined, clear-cut, full image. A ray of the mind goes forth to the object, which in turn shapes and moulds the mental substance into the form of the object. When a man thinks of an image of Lord Krishna or Lord Rama constantly with a single-minded or one-pointed concentration like unbroken flow of oil, his mental substance takes the form of the image. The image leaves a definite impression on the mind. This is called samskara. If this impression is repeated very often, a tendency or habit is formed in the mind. That is the reason why the aspirant is asked to repeat the mantra several lakhs of times. A man can shape his mind for good or bad. It depends upon the nature of food he gives to the mind. Every thought produces a definite change in the substance of the brain also.

One has to create a sattvic background of thought through continued struggle. The mind will run back to its old ruts, and manufacture images of worldly objects. The sadhak will have to bring the mind back again and again to the sattvic background of thought that he has developed. The struggle will be keen in the beginning. Later on the mind will quietly rest in the spiritual background of thought.

Even for a quarter of a second (the time taken for the eye-lids to close and open) if your mind does not run away from the lotus-feet of the Lord (if your devotion is, in other words, like a continuous flow of oil at all times) you will have the whole wealth of all the three worlds at your disposal. The Lord gives

you a word of assurance to this effect. He follows such a devotee wherever he goes.

How to Meditate

Fix your mind at His lotus feet. Then rotate the mind on His silk cloth, srivatsa, diamond gem on His chest, bracelets on His arms, ear-rings, crown on the head; then conch, disc, mace and lotus, His four hands and His feet. Repeat the process again and again. Think of His attributes also. In this way you can meditate on Krishna, Rama or Siva.

Uddhava's Meditation

Uddhava asked: "In what form and with what rites should the devotee think of You? Please inform me of the same fully."
Sri Krishna said; "Seated comfortably in a seat neither high nor low, keeping the hands near the body unmoved, control the eye from wandering outwards. (Fix it on the tip of the nose to prevent distraction.) Control the breath by taking it through one nostril and letting it out through the other, and vice-versa. Control the senses.
Pronounce OM continuously and with deep devotion both while inhaling and exhaling.
"The above practice daily at the three periods (morning, noon and dusk) will enable the jiva to get perfect control of breath within a month. Imagine in the heart the lotus flower with its petals as seat, and fancy the sun, moon and fire to be the three lights, at their proper places. Concentrate your mind and imagine My present form as seated in the flower, with calm, dignified smiling face, the cheeks resplendent with the lustre of the gold ear-rings; of beautiful neck, of sky colour, wearing a white cloth of spotless purity, with the ornament srivatsa and Goddess Lakshmi on the chest; with the weapons and other usual appendages - chakra, mace, conch and lotus flower - in My four hands, My feet shining with diamonds; with the splendour of the various

ornaments on my body - crown, diamond at the chest, waist-ring, and the amulet at the shoulder - overflowing with grace towards my devotees.
"Gaze at the whole form till you complete even the details, and then fix your mind on the same without thinking of anything else. By thus looking at the form and fixing the mind without it wandering elsewhere, your face will gradually wear an ecstatic look. When thus the mind, oblivious of everything else (forgetting even the triple differences — the person concentrating the mind, the form on which the mind is concentrated and the act of concentration), gets fixed in concentration on My form, you become completely merged in Me (in the turiya or conscious blissful ecstatic state) just as a ball of fire gets merged in a big bonfire. By constant practice of this samadhi or ecstasy you very soon get rid of all delusion caused by diversity, and attain bliss."
This is a beautiful exercise for meditation presented by Lord Krishna Himself in the Bhagavatam.

SAMADHI

The samadhi experienced by a bhakta is bhava samadhi. The devotee attains the state through bhava and maha bhava. A bhakta who meditates on the form of Lord Sri Krishna will see Krishna and Krishna only, everywhere, when he is established in samadhi. He will see himself as Sri Krishna. The gopis of Brindavan and Gouranga and Ekanath had this experience.
Those who meditate on
the all-pervading Krishna will have another kind of experience the consciousness of the Lord in His form as the manifested universe.
The bhakta enjoys the warm embrace of the Divine. He attains divine auspiciousness. All the spiritual wealth of the Lord belongs to him. He is endowed with divine vision, lustrous subtle body and divine senses. He does not like to have complete absorption or merging in the Lord, but wants to remain himself, separate in front of Him and taste the divine nectar of God-love. Absorption in the Lord comes to him temporarily in the intensity of his

love and experience in the beginning, though he does not like it. He then attains similarity with God. He is God-like. Eventually he attains oneness but does not lose his separate identity as a devotee.

Cosmic Consciousness

The four kinds of liberation and the bhava samadhi of bhaktas, the lower samadhis of a raja yogi (savitarka, nirvitarka, savichara, nirvichara, sananda, sasmita, etc.) and the lower savikalpa samadhis (shabdanuvid, dhrishyanuvid) of a vedantin, all lead to the experience of cosmic consciousness. The ways of approach may be different, but the fruit is the same. The experiences are common.

Intuition, revelation, inspiration and ecstacy are synonymous terms.

The state of cosmic consciousness is grand and sublime. It induces awe, supreme joy and highest unalloyed felicity free from pain, sorrow and fear.

This state of cosmic consciousness is below the absolute consciousness of nirguna-Brahman, wherein the seer, sight and the things seen; or the knower, knowable and knowledge; or the subject and the object, become one. Sri Sankara, Dattatreya, Vama Dev, Jada Bharat, Mansoor, Shams Tabriez, Madalasa and Yajnavalkya had the experience of absolute consciousness, whereas Ram Das, Tulsi Das, Kabir, Hafiz, Tukaram, Mira, Gauranga, Madhava, Ramanuja, Lord Jesus and Lord Buddha had experience of cosmic consciousness.

In cosmic consciousness there is yet the seer and the seen. It is doubtless a very subtle divine experience. It is a revelation of the causal world. This consciousness is the experience wherein there is neither time, space nor causation. It is unconditioned ineffable state.

The scriptures describe it negatively as 'neti, neti - not this, not this', and the mind and speech return back from it baffled, as they are not able to grasp and describe it. The wise who know Brahman, which is bliss, are not afraid of anything at any time.

Cosmic consciousness is to be felt by the seeker. It cannot be described in words, because language is imperfect. Cosmic consciousness is the experience

of Brahma-loka. It is the consciousness of Brahma or Hiranyagarbha (cosmic intelligence).
He who experiences cosmic consciousness attains many kinds of siddhis, which are described in the Bhagavatam and Raja Yoga of Patanjali Maharishi. Arjuna, Sanjaya and Devaki also had this experience of cosmic consciousness. Devaki saw the whole universe in the mouth of the baby Krishna. The Bhagavad Gita describes this state of consciousness through the mouth of Arjuna in these words: "I see Thee without beginning, middle or end, infinite in power, of endless arms, the sun and the moon being Thy eyes, the burning fire Thy mouth, heating the whole universe with Thy radiance. This space between heaven and earth and all the quarters are filled by Thee alone. Having seen this, Thy wonderful and terrible form, the three worlds are trembling with fear, O great-souled Being.
Verily, into Thee enter these hosts of gods. Some extol Thee in fear with joined palms. "May it be well' — saying thus, bands of great sages and perfected ones praise Thee with complete hymns."
In the West also, people have to recognise the truth about cosmic consciousnes in which one rises above body-consciousness.
Some have also tasted and experienced this state. In France, Professor Bergson preached about intuition which transcends reason but does not contradict it. Bucke describes cosmic consciousness as follows: "Cosmic consciousness is a third form, which is far above simple consciousness.
It is supraconceptual. The cosmic consciousness, as its name implies, is the life and order of the universe. Along with the consciousness of the cosmos there occurs an intellectual enlightenment, which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence. To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elation and joyousness and a quickening of the moral sense, which is fully striking and more important — both to the race and the individual - than is the enhanced intellectual power. With these comes what may be called a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, not a conviction that he shall have it, but the consciousness that he has it already."
The eye celestial usually comes to a yogi (mystic) who has advanced much in mysticism. But it is not possible for everyone to get this celestial eye, as each and every one cannot be a mystic. Sri Krishna therefore said to Arjuna, "In the

form in which you have seen Me, I cannot be seen even by means of Vedas, by austerities, by gifts or by sacrifice." (Chap. XI-53).

He who gets the experiences of supercosmic consciousness is one who had obtained all that he desires. He feels "There is nothing more to be known by me." The little 'I' has melted. The differentiating mind has vanished. All barriers, all sense of duality, differences and separateness have disappeared. There is no idea of time and space, there is only eternity. The jiva has realised his identity with Brahman. The ideas of caste, creed and colour have gone. Even the slight body-consciousness disappears. He has to be fed by others. The world completely disappears for him. He experiences the state described, by the scriptures: "There is no such thing as diversity."

The world is a mental creation. It is mere impression only. There is no world during sleep. You may argue that the world exists for the waking man. Yes, quite true. If there is mind there is world. What is mind then? It is a bundle of impressions, ideas, habits. The two currents of likes and dislikes keep up the life of the mind. If these two currents are destroyed, there is death for the mind, which is called manonasha. That yogi who has achieved manonasha cannot perceive the world. If you can consciously destroy the mind through samadhi, this world disappears. Just as you see only the rope when the wrong notion of snake has vanished, so also you see only Brahman when the wrong notion of world and body has disappeared by knowledge of the Self.

Scientists and students of science may not believe me. Do this practice now. Shut yourself up in a room for a week. Cut off all connections. Do not read newspapers. Observe perfect mauna (silence) also. Then feel how far the impressions of the world remain in your mind. You will find and feel that the world is a dream. If you practise for a long time you will realise the truth of my statement.

The world is a solid reality for a man of passion and greed, for a sensualist who has gross mind. For a yogi of cosmic consciousness, it dwindles into an airy nothing. Cosmic consciousness is the fruit of chaitanya samadhi, where the yogi feels perfect 'awareness', supersensuous plane of knowledge and intuition, where the subtle desires and tendencies are fried in-toto. He feels 'Aham asmi - I exist'.

The jada-samadhi of a hatha yogi cannot bring in this superconscious state. Jada-samadhi is something like deep sleep.
There is no super-sensuous divine knowledge. In this state the breathing stops completely, the prana is fixed up somewhere in the muladhara chakra; even if you cut his leg he will not feel any pain and there will be no bleeding, but the innate tendencies and desires are not burnt here. In jada-samadhi there is alambana (support for the mind), there is triputi (knower, knowable, knowledge). In savikalpa samadhi or lower samadhi there are subtle innate tendencies (samskaras), but in nirvikalpa samadhi there is neither support for the mind, nor knowledge, knowable and knower (triputi), nor samskara. Jada-samadhi cannot give liberation. One can enter into jada-samadhi without moral perfection, whereas cosmic consciousness can never be had without ethical perfection.
Note this point very carefully.
Absolute fearlessness, desirelessness, thoughtlessness, - lessness, mine-lessness, angerlessness, Brahmic aura in the face and freedom from joy and grief are some of the signs that indicate that a man has reached the state of superconsciousness. He is also always in a state of perfect bliss. You can never see anger, depression, cheerlessness or sorrow in his face. You will find elevation, joy and peace in his presence.
Just as a drunken man is not conscious whether he has cloth on his body or not when it is in a state of dropping down on the ground, so also the yogi who is experiencing supracosmic consciousness is not conscious of his body.
Just as a man doubts whether his rotten shoe is clinging to his foot or not when he is sometimes absent-minded, so also the jivanmukta doubts whether his body is hanging like an old rotten shoe or not. That sannyasi or avadhuta who fully rests in Brahman and has no idea at all of the slightest difference between a male and female, is entitled to throw off his kowpeen altogether. That kowpeen also will drop by itself.
"He who is naked should not live in an ashram or a town or a village. He should roam about unknown, not caring for good or bad and cast off his body as a slough on a dung-hill." So says Narada-Parivrajaka Upanishad.
To live naked in an ashram, but to have all sorts of comforts, to have disciples and to take interest in the development of the ashram, does not look nice. It

does not appeal to some sections of people, at least. That sannyasin or mahatma who wants or keeps something for his body in an ashram can wear also a small cloth along with his kowpeen. This will not go against his realisation. Physical nudity alone will not constitute real renunciation. Desire only God. Be wholly devoted to Him. He will lift you up, purify and inspire you. Kindle the flame of universal love and attain the intuitive vision of identity with Him.

Glory of a Bhagavata

A bhagavata is one who has realised or seen God (Bhagavan).
He is a liberated soul. Vedantins use the term 'jivanmukta', bhaktas use the term 'bhagavata'. These two terms are like 'pani' in Hindustani and 'water' in English.
Words cannot adequately describe the exalted state of a bhagavata. His merciful look removes the agonies of millions of persons. His sweet words bring joy, solace, strength and peace to those who surround him. His thoughts radiate messages of peace and goodwill all round. His very presence brings hope to the hopeless and strength to the depressed. Indra and other gods stand up with folded hands to receive him with due respect and honour. All psychic powers roll under his feet. Rajahs and maharajahs place their hands at his lotus feet. There is a peculiar grace in his walk, charm and lustre in his face, sweetness and elegance in his speech and grandeur in his gait. His sympathetic glance can infuse life in a dead man.
In Chhandogya Upanishad there is this glorious description of a bhagavata:

Should he desire the region of father, he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, fathers receive him with welcome.
Next, should he desire the region of mother he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, mothers receive him with welcome.
Next, should he desire the region of brother, he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, brothers receive him with welcome.
Next, should he desire the region of sister, he attains it with glory, for verly the moment he wishes it, sisters receive him with welcome.

Next, should he desire the region of friends, he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, friends receive him with welcome.
Next, should he desire the region of scents and garlands, he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, scents and garlands receive him with welcome.
Next, should he desire the region of food and drink, he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, food and drink receive him with welcome.
Next, should he desire the region of song and music, he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, song and music receive him with welcome.
Next, should he desire the region of woman, he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, women receive him with welcome.
Whatever country he desires, he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, it abideth for him.

The bhagavata becomes independent in all the worlds. By his mere will his father, mother, brothers, sisters and friends come and connect themselves with him. He is of pure nature and as such his will is infallible, like that of the Lord. To whatever place he is attached and whatever (besides those enumerated) he desires by his mere will, all desirable places and things do come to him: and thereby having none of his wishes unfulfilled and having obtained all that he desires, he feels happy and great. He obtains self-lordship. He becomes lord of speech, lord of the eye, lord of the ear, lord of understanding. All the gods bring an offering for him. In Vedanta Sutras Chapter IV, Adhayaya IV, Para. 17, you will find: "With the exception of world-business (creation) the bhagavata possesses all lordly powers." He is remote from all world-business. Because released souls have minds, they might be of different minds, and one might have the intention of preserving the world, while another might wish to destroy it! Such conflicts can only be avoided by assuming that the wishes of one conform to those of another; and from this it follows that all souls depend upon the highest Lord.
The will of the bhagavata differs in nature from the will of ordinary men. It has the power of effecting something that possesses such stability as the special purpose needs. Just as the one flame of a lamp can pass over into several flames (lighted at the original flame) because it possesses the power of

modifying itself, thus the soul of a bhagavata, although one only, multiplying itself through its lordly power, enters into all those bodies. The scripture says that in this way one may become many. "He is one-fold, he is three-fold, five-fold, seven-fold." Chhandogya Upanishad (7-26-2).
When the bhagavata wishes to have a body, he appears with one; when he wishes to be disembodied, he is without one, for he has various wishes and all wishes are realised.
Glory and victory to such exalted bhagavatas who are visible moving gods on this earth!

APPENDIX

Other Mantras

Mantras	***Devata***
Om Sri Maha-Ganapataye namah	Lord Ganesha
Hari Om	Lord Hari
Hari Om Tat Sat	Lord Hari
Hari Rama Hari Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare	Maha Mantra
Om Sri Krishnaya Govindaya Gopijana Vallabhaya namah	Lord Krishna
Om Sri Krishnaya namah	Lord Krishna
Om Sri Rama, Jaya Rama, Jaya Jaya Rama	Lord Rama
Om Sri Ramaya namah	Lord Rama
Om Sri Sita-Ramachandrabhyam namah	Lord Rama
Sri Rama Rama Rameti, Rami Rami Manorame, Sahasranama Tattulyam Rama nama Varanane Ramaya Ramabhadraya Ramachandraya Vedhase Raghunathaya Nathaya Sitayah Pataye namah	Lord Rama
Sita Ram; Radhe Shyam; Radhe Krishna	Jugal Mantra
Om Sri Ramah sharanam mama	Sharanagati Mantra (for surrender)
Om Sri Krishnah sharanam mama	Sharanagati Mantra
Om Sri Sita Ramah sharanam mama	Sharanagati Mantra
Om Sri Ramachandra Charanau sharanam prapadye	Sharanagati Mantra

Om Sri Narayana Charanau sharanam prapadye	Sharanagati Mantra
Om Sri Hanumate namah	Shri Hanuman
Om Sri Sarasvatyai namah	Shri Sarasvati
Om Sri Kalikayai namah	Sri Kalika
Om Sri Durgayai namah	Sri Devi
Om Sri Maha Lakshmyai namah	Sri Lakshmi
Om Sri Sharavanabhavaya namah	Lord Subrahmanya or Kartikeya
Om Soham	Vedantic formula
Om Aham Brahma asmi	Vedantic formula
Om Tat Tvam asmi	Vedantic formula
Om Sri Tripurasundaryai namah	Tripura Sundari
Om Sri Balaparameshvaryai namah	Sharada

Bija Mantras

OM: OM consists of three letters: A, U and M. It signifies the three periods of time, the three states of consciousness, the entire existence. Study the Mandukyopanishad in detail in order to understand the meaning of OM.
Haum: In this mantra, Ha is Siva. Au is Sadasiva. The nada and bindu mean that which dispels sorrow. With this mantra Lord Siva should be worshipped.
Dum: Here Da means Durga. U means to protect. Nada means the mother of the universe. Bindu signifies action (worship or prayer).
This is the mantra of Durga.
Kreem: With this mantra, Kalika should be worshipped. Ka is Kali.
Ra is Brahman. Ee is Mahamaya. Nada is the mother of the universe. Bindu is the dispeller of sorrow.
Hreem: This is the mantra of Mahamaya or Bhuvaneshvari. Ha means Siva. Ra is prakriti. Ee means Mahamaya. Nada is the mother of the universe. Bindu means the dispeller of sorrow.
Shreem: This is the mantra of Mahalakshmi. Sa is Mahalakshmi. Ra means wealth. Ee means satisfaction or contentment. Nada is the manifested Brahman or Isvara. Bindu means the dispeller of sorrow.
Aim: This is the bija-mantra of Sarasvati. Ai means Sarasvati.
Bindu means the dispeller of sorrow.

Kleem: This is the Kamabija. Ka means the Lord of desire (Kamadeva). (Ka may also mean Krishna.) La means Indra. Ee means contentment or satisfaction. Nada and bindu mean that which brings happiness and sorrow.
Hoom: In this mantra, Ha is Siva. U is Bhairava. Nada is the Supreme. Bindu means the dispeller of sorrow. This is the threefold bija of armour (coat of mail).
Gam: This is the Ganesha bija. Ga means Ganesha. Bindu means the dispeller of sorrow.
Glaum: This also is a mantra of Ganesha. Ga means Ganesha. La means that which pervades. Au means lustre or brilliance. Bindu means the dispeller of sorrow.
Kshraum: This is the bija of Narasimha. Ksha is Narasimha. Ra is Brahma. Au means with teeth pointing upwards. Bindu means the dispeller of sorrow.
Like these there are many other bija-mantras which signify various devatas. e.g. 'Vyam' is the bija of Vyasa-mantra, 'Brim' of Brihaspati-mantra, 'Ram' of Rama-mantra.

GLOSSARY

Abhinivesha: Clinging to life
Abhyasa: Practice
Adharma: Unrighteousness
Adhyayana: Reading of the Vedas Adhirudha: Mature
Adrishta: Unseen potency
Advaita: Non-dual
Agnihotra: Fire sacrifice
Aham: I; the ego
Aham Brahmasmi: I am Brahman
Ahamkara: Egoism
Ahimsa: Non-violence in thought, word and deed
Ajapa Japa: The mantra 'soham' which is produced by the breath without any conscious effort
Ajna: Centre of spiritual energy located at the eyebrow centre. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)
Akasa: Cosmic storehouse of knowledge
Akhanda: Indivisible; unbroken Akhanda japa: Continuous japa
Akshara laksha japa: Mantra repetition as many lakhs of times as there are syllables in the mantra
Alambana: That in which attachment for Lord Krishna is considered

Alasya: Laziness
Anahat: Centre of spiritual energy located opposite the heart
Anahata sounds: Mystic sounds heard at the anahata centre
Ananya bhakti: One-pointed devotion Anavasada: Cheerfulness and optimism
Anubhava: The effect of one-pointed devotion
Anushthana: Systematic performance of religious practices undertaken for a specific period
Ap: Water
Apana: The down-going breath
Arati: Religious ceremony of waving of lights before the deity
Archana: Offering flowers in worship
Arta: One who is distressed
Artharthi: Seeker of wealth
Arjavan: Straightforwardness
Asana: Posture. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)
Asana siddhi: Perfection in posture
Ashram: Monastery or retreat
Asmita: Egoity
Asuras: Demons
Atma bhav: The feeling that everything is the Self
Atma jnana: Direct knowledge of the Self
Atman: The Self
Atmanivedana: Self surrender
Avadhuta: Naked ascetic
Avatara: Incarnation of God
Avidya: Ignorance
Bandha: A certain class of physical exercise in hatha yoga. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)
Bhagavad Gita: Hindu scripture
Bhagavan: Blessed
Bhagavata: One who has attained Self-realisation through the practice of bhakti yoga
Bhagavatam: Hindu Scripture dealing with the life and teachings of Lord Krishna
Bhagavata Purana: Another name for the Bhagavatam
Bhaj: To serve; to be deeply interested in
Bhajan: Singing the names of the Lord
Bhakta: A devotee of the Lord
Bhakti: Devotion or unselfish love
Bhao(a): Inner feeling
Bhava-samadhi: Superconscious state attained by bhaktas through intense divine devotion
Bija: Seed mantra in which there is latent power
Brahma: The creative aspect of God
Brahmacharya: Celibacy; where the mind moves in God
Brahma jnana: Knowledge of Brahman Brahma loka: Abode of Brahma; heaven
Brahmamuhurta: The period of an hour and a half before sunrise
Brahman: The Absolute Brahmana: Man of wisdom

Brahma vidya: Knowledge of Brahman
Brahmin: Member of the priestly caste
Brindavan: Indian city associated with the life of Lord Krishna
Buddhi: Intellect
Chaitanya: Pure consciousness; dormant potency in a mantra Chakra: Psychic centre in the body; discus
Chittrajalpa: Pain of separation from the Lord
Dacoit: Robber
Dama: Sense control
Damaru: Small drum
Dana: Charity
Darshan: Vision; audience
Dasya: Servant
Dasya bhakti: Devotion to God with the attitude of a servant
Daya: Compassion
Deva: One of the gods
Devata: See Deva
Devi: Another name for Durga or the Divine Mother
Dharma: Righteousness
Drishyanuvid: A lower form of samadhi
Ekadasi: Eleventh day of the Hindu
lunar fortnight
Fakir: Muslim holy man
Gauna: Secondary devotion
Gayatri: Hindu mantra; the personification of the mantra
Ghee: Clarified butter
Gopi: Cowherdess devotees of Lord Krishna
Gudakeshi: One who conquers sleep
Gunas: Qualities of nature - sattva, rajas and tamas
Gungrue: Bells tied to the ankles
Guru: Preceptor
Guru mantra: Mantras extolling the guru
Guru seva: Service of the guru
Guru stotras: Hymns to the guru
Hara: Another name for Lord Siva
Hari: A name of Lord Krishna Hari Om: A benediction
Havan: Fire ceremony
Himsa: Violence
Hiranyagarbha: Cosmic intelligence; the supreme Lord of the universe; cosmic mind
Indra: Chief of the celestials Isavasya Upanishad: Hindu scripture
Ishta devata: One's chosen deity
Ishtam: As above
Ishvara: Personal god; That which is

Ishvarapranidhana: Devotion to the Lord mantra as many hundred thousand times as there are syllables in it.
Purusha: The supreme Being
Raga: Passionate longing
Raga: Indian musical mode
Raga anuga: He who develops raga for Lord Krishna
Raga duesha: Likes and dislikes
Ragatmika bhakti: Primary bhakti
Ragini: Indian musical mode
Raja yoga: The yoga of mysticism. (See Raja Yoga)
Rajah: King
Rajasic: Dynamic; passionate
Rakshasa: Demon
Ramarahasyopanishad: Hindu scripture
Ramayana: Hindu Scripture; story of Lord Rama and Sita
Rani: Queen
Rasa: A state of ecstacy
Rasa lila: Enactment of the story of Lord Krishna and the gopis
Rati: Attachment for Lord Krishna
Rishi: Sage
Rudha: Newly germinated
Rudraksha mala: Rosary made of the seeds of the rudraksha tree; used in worship of Lord Siva
Sadhaka: Spiritual seeker
Sadhana: Spiritual practices
Sadhana chatushtaya: The four kinds of spiritual effort in the path of jnana yoga (see Jnana Yoga)
Sadhana shakti: The energy that comes from spiritual practices
Sadhu: Pious or righteous man; a sannyasin
Saguna: With form
Sahastara: A region in the top of the head in the form of a thousand--petalled lotus. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)
Saivite: Worshipper of Lord Siva
Sakama bhakti: Secondary devotion
Sakhya: The attitude of a friend
Saligram: A special stone used in the worship of Lord Vishnu
Sama: Tranquility; control of mind
Samadhana: Proper concentration
Samadhi: Superconscious state. (See Raja Yoga)
Samarasa bhakti: A devotee who has equal vision, worshipping all forms of God
Sambhoga: Intense ecstacy
Sammelan: Conference
Samsara: Life through repeated births and deaths; worldly life
Samskaras: Innate tendencies
Samyama: Perfect restraint;

concentration, meditation and samadhi
Sananda: With bliss; a kind of samadhi. (See Raja Yoga)
Sandhi: Junction between day and night, e.g. dawn and twilight Sandilya Upanishad: Hindu scripture
Sankirtan: Group chanting of the names of the Lord
Sannyasi(n): A monk; one who has embraced a life of renunciation Santa bhava: Where the mind of the devotee is full of knowledge and is emotionless
Saptaha: Reading of the Bhagavatam
Sarasuati: Goddess of wisdom
Sarupya mukti: Liberation where the devotee attains the same form as the Lord
Sat-chit-ananda: Existence-knowledge-bliss absolute
Sasmita: A type of samadhi with the feeling of 'I exist'. (See Raja Yoga)
Satsang: Association with the wise Sattoa: Purity, light, reality
Sattvic: Pure
Sattvic bhakti: The state of mind produced by realising the presence of Lord Krishna
Satyam: Truth
Savichara: With deliberation and reasoning or enquiry
Savitarka: With logic and argumentation
Shabdanuvid: A lower type of samadhi
Shakta: One who worships the divine Mother as the most supreme deity
Shakti: Power; energy; force
Shatsampat: Sixfold virtues. (See Jnana Yoga [Vedanta])
Shodashakshara: Mantra of sixteen syllables
Siddha asana: Meditation posture. (Sec Health and Hatha Yoga)
Siddhis: Perfection; psychic power
Siva linga(m): Symbol of Lord Siva
Sivoham: I am Siva
Sloka: Verse
Smarana: Remembrance
Soham: I am He Sphatika: Crystal
Sraddha: Faith
Sravana(m): Hearing of the scriptures Sri-vidya: A very powerful mantra Srimad Bhagavatam: Hindu scripture
Sringara rasa: See madhurya bhava
Srivatsa: An ornament
Srutis: Scriptures
Sthayi: Permanent
Sudra: One of the servant caste
Sukha asana: Meditation posture. (See Health and Hatha Yoga)
Surya: The sun

Sushumna: A subtle channel which extends from the base of the spine to the top of the head. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)
Suadhisthana: The psychic centre situated near the root of the reproductive organ. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)
Svastika asana: A meditation posture. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)
Suetashvatara Upanishad: A Hindu scripture
Tadasraya bhakti: Worship of Lord Krishna with the feeling that He is the support for the universe
Tadrupa bhakti: When the devotee cannot remain without the Lord
Taittiriyopanishad: Hindu scripture
Tamas: Ignorance; inertia; darkness
Tamasic: Pertaining to tamas Tandra: Half-sleepy state
Tanmaya bhakti: Where the devotee becomes one with the Lord
Tantric: Worship of God as the divine Mother in a particular form
Tapas: Austerity
Tat tam asi: Thou art That
Tejas: Brilliancy (especially spiritual); the element of fire
Tirukkural: Hindu scripture
Titiksha: Endurance
Tratak: Steady gazing at a fixed point
Tul(a)si: Another name for the basil plant, from the stems of which malas are made
Uddipana: That which awakens attachment for the Lord
Udghurna: Emotional contortions caused by extreme sorrow at separation from the Lord
Ulta-nama: Where the name of God is said backwards. e.g. Rama is Mara
Upamsu: Japa done with a humming sound
Upanishads: Hindu texts dealing with the ultimate Truth and its realisation
Uparati: Renunciation
Upasana: Devout meditation; worship; sitting near
Urdhvareta: One in whom the seminal energy flows upwards by the practice of celibacy
Vaidhi bhakti: Bhakti as a form of discipline
Vaikhari: Dense audible sound
Vaikuntha The abode of Lord Vishnu Vaira bhakta: Negative devotion
Vairagi: A man of vairagya
Vairagya: Indifference towards and disgust for all worldly things and enjoyments; dispassion
Vaishnavite: A worshipper of Lord Vishnu
Vaishyas: One of the trading caste
Valmiki: The sage who wrote the Ramayana
Vandana: Prostration to the Lord
Varna: Colour
Varuna: The divine intelligence presiding over the element of water
Vasana: Subtle desire
Vasistha: The sage who wrote the Yoga Vasistha, a scripture dealing with the highest wisdom
Vasudeva: Another name for Lord Krishna; He who abides in all things and in whom all things abide
Vatsalya-bhava: Where the devotee feels that the Lord is his son

Vayu: The wind god; air; vital breath; prana
Veda: Revealed texts. The highest authority amongst the Aryans of India. It is held that they were not written by anyone and are, therefore, free from the imperfections to which human productions are subject
Vedanta: (Lit.) The end of the Vedas; the Upanishads; the school of Hindu thought upholding the doctrine of non-dualism. (See Jnana Yoga [Vedanta])
Vedantic: Pertaining to vedanta
Vedantin: One who follows the path of
vedantic sadhana
Vedic: Pertaining to the Vedas
Vibhava: Extension of rasa
Vibhuti: Sacred ash
Vimoka: Longing for God alone
Vina: Indian stringed musical instrument
Vipralambha: Separation of lovers which intensifies their future union
Viraha: Burning agony due to separation from the Lord
Virat: Macrocosm; the physical world that we see
Vishnu: The second of the three aspects of the Absolute, the aspect of preservation
Vishnu Purana: Hindu scripture
Vishnu Rahasya: Hindu scripture
Vishnu Sahastanam: The thousand names of Lord Vishnu
Vishuddha: Centre of psychic energy located in the region of the throat. (See Health and Hatha Yoga)
Viveka: Discrimination between the Real and the unreal
Vritti: Thought-wave; mental modification
Vyabhicharini: Emotions exhibited in bhakti
Yajna: A sacrifice
Yama: The god of Death and
dispenser of justice; the first limb of raja yoga; restraint. (See Raja Yoga)
Yoga: Union
Yoga Sutras: Aphorisms pertaining to raja yoga. (See Raja Yoga)
Yoni mudra: A hatha yoga technique. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)
Zenana: Muslim harem